

Esoteric And Liberating Aspect Of Marriage

धन पिरु एहि न आखीअनि बहनि इकठे होइ ॥
 एक जोति दुइ मूरती धन पिरु कहीऐ सोइ ॥३॥
(Adi Granth, Raag Suhi M3, Page 788: 11)

**They are not to be called husband and wife
 who only sit together; rather they are husband
 and wife who have one spirit in two bodies.**

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Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Introduction

A Zen student asked his master: “Where can I find peace of mind?”

“Find the point where the past is over and the future is yet to begin,” replied the Master.

The truth is, we are seekers, all of us. We may seek at many different levels. We may seek consciously or unconsciously, but we all seek. What do we seek?

- If we look deeper we will find that we all seek the same thing, which can be simply put as ‘Peace and Happiness’.
- We all want many different things, wealth, women, success, and fame etc.....why?
- Because we think if we get that we will be happy, which is true, the mind becomes happy when its desire is met, it becomes peaceful, temporarily though.
- We do things for ourselves and others, in both the cases, rather in all cases the deeper intention that we have is our own peace and happiness that is what we all really want.
- Well there's nothing wrong in that, but the problem starts when we let our peace and happiness depend on something outside of us, for the simple reason that....everything changes! Nothing lasts, most people learn it the hard way.
- Now, how is one to find this permanent peace and happiness? Firstly, is there such a thing called permanent peace and happiness?
- Yes there is, and only the people who have found it can show the way.

We will see how marriage can be the path to this highest goal of mankind.

To begin with, one needs to know where he or she is:

- This comes from questioning, why am I like this? Why is the world like this? Who am I? Why do these things happen to me? Who is God? How did creation happen? What is the truth? So on and so forth.
- The questioning comes from either of the two causes, confusion within or calamity without, disturbance. This is where seeking for the higher begins.
- One might be comfortable outside but within himself, in his mind he might be disturbed, example Buddha. He was a prince, he had everything, yet he was shaken within.

Secondly, we might be ignorantly blissful within but disaster is struck outside:

- But please do bear in mind that even though we are confused or disturbed, within or without or both, only if the seeking is from deep within shall we find a permanent way out.

After realizing where he or she is, the person plans where to go:

- And we look forward to the end, of finding permanent peace and happiness.

Finally comes the step of 'how to go?'

This is what is illustrated in the above story. A seeker approaches a living master, who is the embodiment of the highest truth, and asks him the way to be at peace:

- A true master is a person who is the master of himself, this is how he is able to guide us.
- The master will be most helpful if we have deep respect and faith in him. His unsaid promise is that that he will hold up his end, the rest is in our hands.

We are not at peace because we are not in the present moment:

- All actions we do are only for two reasons and two reasons alone! It is either, to get something that we don't have or to maintain what we already have.
- The mind is always running between the past and future, when it is truly in the present, you are at peace. But how can we get the mind to always be in the present? How can we master our minds?

The mind is just a bundle of thoughts, the thoughts are the cause and thoughts are the effect:

- Our thoughts make us who we are, if we have to change we have to change our thoughts. The thought creates the thinker, if there are no thoughts where is the thinker? Where are we? Where am I? What remains is only the highest reality.
- Like Adi Shankaracharya said in the Bhaja Govindam – “*Parame brahmani ko'pi na saktah*” no one thinks about the Supreme Reality, the highest truth, which is beyond all names and forms, beyond the mind and its experiences, a state of just being, infinite bliss, stillness, compassion, unconditional love and highest wisdom.
- This is the divinity within each and every being, human beings have the potential to realize this.
- This is the highest goal, this is the purpose of life, the purpose to be complete, and the purpose to be wise, to be compassionate, and to just be! What you constantly think of, you become that.

Talking about purpose, as the Masters say, the purpose of life can be narrowed down to just one phrase “*Atmano mokshartam*”. This is the formula, anything that we do, if we keep this as the reference we won't go wrong:

- *Atmano Mokshartam* - what we do for our own purification, for our own liberation. It's all about purifying the mind, the cleaner we get, more the divinity shines through us.

Marriage is discussed about in many ways, as an institution, as a security, as a social obligation, as a custom, as a ritual etc.:

- In subsequent chapters we will try to understand marriage as a purification process, as a *Yajna*. This is what it was meant for.
- Marriage 'Vivah' is one of the sixteen *Samskaras* in Hinduism. *Samskara* means that which purifies. In ancient times they considered marriage as purifying.
- Purifying a man and a woman so that they can individually evolve to their best through each other.
- The ritual, the process of the marriage ceremony can be purifying if one knows what it really means.
- This will help those seekers who seek the highest truth by giving them a vision of how we can be free from our concepts and see divinity within and in the world and realize what great wisdom has been left behind for us by the great Rishis and Masters.

We will try to look deeper into some of the rituals and see the spiritual dimension of marriage.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Rukmini Kalyana (*The Story as we know it – The Macro Aspect*)

Below is a short narration of Lord Krishna's marriage with Rukmini.

Rukmini was the daughter of Maharaja Bhismaka, the King of Vidarbha:

- The King had five sons and one daughter. The sons were, Rukmi the eldest, Rukmaratha, Rukmabahu, Rukmakese and the fifth Rukmamali.
- Rukmini was a very beautiful young girl and pure of heart.
- Many great men visited the palace, like Narada Muni and other saints and sages. When Rukmini would interact with them she would hear stories of Krishna and his transcendental qualities.
- She had never seen him, she grew great respect for him and desired to marry him.

All of the King's family members and relatives decided to give Rukmini in marriage to Krishna:

- However her elder brother Rukmi was against it. He wanted to get her married to his friend Sisupala.
- Sisupala was not a good man but the King had to agree to this because of Rukmi his eldest son.

Rukmini was very sad about this and she decided to do something about it:

- She wrote a letter to Krishna asking him to come take her away if he felt that she deserved him.
- She gave the letter to a noble Brahmana and asked him to deliver it to Krishna in Dwarka.

The Brahmana took the letter and left to Dwarka:

- Krishna received the guest with great respect. Later they discussed the purpose of the Brahmana's visit.
- The Brahmana explained the situation and gave Krishna the letter from Rukmini.

In the letter Rukmini had confessed her unconditional love for the Lord and how she has surrendered to his divine nature, she also confessed her desire to marry him and now that her marriage was fixed with Sisupala she wanted Krishna to come kidnap her from her Kingdom:

- She explained that it was a custom in her family to visit the temple of the goddess Durga, their family deity before marriage.
- She suggested that it would be easier for him to kidnap her either while she is on her way to the temple or on her way back to the palace.

Krishna was very pleased with Rukmini's letter and he decided to leave immediately to Vidarbha:

- Meanwhile, all the wedding arrangements were in progress at Vidarbha. Some rumours had spread about Rukmini sending a secret messenger to Krishna so the soldiers were prepared.

Inside the palace Rukmini was waiting for Krishna and the Brahmana to come, she became anxious:

- She then saw that the Brahmana had returned and she was very happy, the Brahmana told her that Krishna is in the Kingdom and is willing to take her away.

Rukmini got nicely dressed and left for the temple with her family guarded by a lot of soldiers:

- After the prayers in the temple when she came out, among a lot of princes who were outside waiting to see her was Krishna.

- He took her by hand and drove away in his chariot. He fought many men, he was supported by his brother Balarama who had come there with his army.

When Rukmi learnt about this he immediately left to kill Krishna and get Rukmini back:

- Rukmi stopped them on their way to Dwarka and fought Krishna, but in vain.
- He lost the battle and Krishna was about to kill him, when he saw Rukmini at his feet requesting him to spare her brother's life.
- Acceding to Rukmini's request, Krishna spared his life but shaved Rukmi's head and moustache, a humiliation which was worse than death.

Krishna and Rukmini reached Dwarka and had a grand marriage ceremony according to Vedic ritualistic principle:

- The entire city was very happy with their marriage. People came from all over to see their marriage ceremony, even Rukmini's family and relatives were there.
- It was an auspicious and glorious day, the Lord of all beings and goddess of fortune were united.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Rukmini Kalyana (Contemplation on the Story – The Micro Aspect)

The true nature of soul is transcendental wisdom, peace, contentment, unconditional love and devotion, bliss, forgiveness, inactivity, carefree, compassion, forbearance, discriminative, love and longing for union with the Creator, but we have forgotten it:

- On this path to go back to our true self we can take the help of these stories.
- A very long time ago when the great beings realized the highest they wanted to pass it down to us all, they knew that it needed to be protected if it had to last a very long time, and that's why they hid the truth in stories, and it worked!
- We all know the stories, so do our elders and so will our kids. But does anybody know the truth? Can anyone see the greatest treasure that has been left for us in these stories?

Now, all these stories have two aspects to them, one, let's call it a Macro aspect, this refers to what actually happened, outside, example, war or magic, about kings and drama etc., basically the story outside what we can see, that which we have understood from reading the story.

However, more importantly there is a Micro aspect, the second one, the spiritual aspect, this is what the story was meant for in reality which we don't know, until now:

- The micro aspect deals with how the story applies within us. All the characters are within us. All these stories are about 'us'.

Since the topic is about marriage, we have taken a story relevant to it. Let's now try to understand the truth in the story:

- Krishna represents the pure consciousness, the one who is one with infinity, the one whose ego is destroyed, a Janani, a Guru. Rukmini represents that part of us which is inclined towards God.

- On hearing about such Guru or reading about him, maybe through any medium that we get to know about an evolved person, we grow closer to him, we desire him.
- If we do meet such a divine being, one would want to be always with him or her, because there is so much peace in their presence, something inexplicable happens.

Within oneself both Krishna and Rukmini are there:

- We first try to be Rukmini seeking the Lord who is within.
- Tragically there are other characters as well, Rukmi, the conceit. The conceit wants its way. Rukmi, the conceit wants its sister Rukmini, the intellect, to get married to Sisupala, the desire.
- We don't allow ourselves to be at peace, we are afraid of Satsangs, spirituality, meditation, silence. No, we can't do it. We want to run!
- We want to become very powerful, our desires are endless, and so we allow our minds to wander outside.
- The mind going outside is Rukmini marrying Sisupala, whereas the mind going to the self (soul) and Self (Creative Power - Word, Shabd) within is Krishna marrying Rukmini.

How will the mind go within?

- Ah, like in the story Rukmini has to send a letter to Krishna to come take her.
- She sends a Brahmana, which refers to all our good deeds, our good karma and sincere seeking is our calling the Lord, the Guru.
- He will come and kidnap our intellect, he will come and save us from suffering, he will put an end to it.
- But no, the conceit won't give up, it will try to fight with 'No Ego', and that is when it will fail miserably and die.

- The conceit can fight with another conceit, the mind can understand another mind but it can't stand against the Word of Guru.
- The Guru will destroy our conceit and we will unite with Him, this is liberation, and it has to be achieved while living.

The story of Rukmini Kalyana actually sets an example, it conveys the purpose of marriage and the types of marriages too:

- What we can see at first is the kidnapping and the shaving of the head and the fighting, but have we tried to see beyond all these?
- Have we tried to understand what Dharma is from Krishna's action?
- Do you think, the Lord who sang the Bhagavad Gita for mankind, would do Adharma?

No, there must be something that we are missing. Let us now try to understand the story in a Macro aspect better.

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Types of Marriages

Long ago in ancient India the mode of marriage was 'Swayamvara', which meant that the girl would choose whom she would marry:

- The girl would undergo her education at home from the parents, when the time came she would choose a man more spiritually evolved than her and get married to him.
- They would then live their life seeing the Lord in each other and in all and work hand in hand in Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha.
- This is what happened with Rukmini too. She chose Krishna for all the right reasons, not out of lust or infatuation or ignorance, but out of deep love and respect, out of devotion.

Rukmi wanted to get Rukmini married to Sisupala against her will, here we can see two types of marriage:

- **First** is 'Asura Vivaha', which means when a girl is to marry a man with Asuric (Demonic) qualities, this type of marriage is against the girl's will. Usually the groom is not of the same stature as the bride.

Like in the story, Rukmini was to marry Sisupala who was not at all suitable for her, but because of the Rukmi her brother she had to agree.

- **Secondly**, there is 'Rakshasa Vivah', in this type of marriage the bride is ready to marry groom, but the bride's family is against the marriage.

In such cases, if the groom's family forcibly takes away the bride, it is a "Rakshasa Vivah".

The next type of marriage that we see in the story is 'Gandharva Vivah', when a man and a woman marry with each other's consent but may not have the consent of their family then this wedding is called Gandharva Vivah:

- After reading Rukmini's letter when Krishna accepts and decides to marry Rukmini, that is the moment when they got married.
- Marriage is not what is put on paper or what is done socially, it is the inner bond between two mature individuals. When they both decide in silence then that is it, the rest is for the world.

We finally come to the last type of marriage that we see in the story and that is 'Brahma Vivah':

- In Brahma marriage once the boy completes his Brahmacharya Ashram (student-hood), he is eligible to get married.
- His parents then approach the parents or guardian of a girl belonging to a good family and ask them for the hand of their daughter for their son.
- The father of the girl also carefully chooses the groom who is well versed in Vedas and of a noble character.
- This is how Brahma marriage was arranged. There was no dowry system at that time, a girl came with two garments and a few ornaments only.
- According to Dharmashastras, "Brahma Vivah" is the best marriage among all.

When two evolved beings come together to get married, understanding its purpose and the process, the rituals and their deeper meaning, understanding the spiritual dimension of marriage then it is called 'Brahma Vivah', and this is what Krishna and Rukmini had when they went back to Dwarka.

There are a few more types of marriages mentioned below:

Daiva Vivah:

In this type of Hindu marriage, the girl's family looks for a groom. If a girl has not been able to get a suitable husband for a period of time, her family look to marry her to a priest who officiates over sacrifices.

Arsha Vivah:

Here the groom gives a gift (a cow and a pair of bulls) to the girl's family. This usually takes place when the girl's parents cannot afford to meet the expense of the marriage. This is not considered an ideal marriage because there is a monetary consideration involved in this wedding.

Prajapatya Vivah:

Somewhat similar to the Brahma Vivah, except in this case the girl's family looks for a groom and the ritual of Kanyadaan is not followed. Instead of "Kanyadaan", the bride's father hands over protection of his daughter to the groom during the "Panigrahan" ritual. The actual wedding takes place after "Panigrahan".

Paishacha Vivah:

This type of marriage is not allowed. In this marriage, a girl, who is not in her senses (she may not be of sound mind or intoxicated or drugged, etc.) is forcibly married off. The girl has not consented to this marriage.

These are the eight types of marriages as per Manusmriti and the best among them is Brahma Vivah.

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Samskaras

Two monks were returning to the monastery in the evening:

- It had rained and there were puddles of water on the road.
- At one place a beautiful young woman was standing unable to walk across because of a puddle of water.
- The elder of the two monks went up to her, carried her and left her on the other side of the road.

The younger monk who was watching all this was in confusion, he was in his mind questioning the actions of his brother monk, but he did not find the courage to ask him. All the way he was thinking about the incident, he just could not figure it out:

- When they reached their destination the younger monk managed to gather strength and he asked the elder monk, "Sir, as monks, we cannot touch a woman?" The elder monk answered "yes, brother".
- The younger monk asks again, "but then Sir, how is that you carried that woman on the Roadside?"
- The elder monk questioned "which woman brother?" "The one you left on to the other side of the road!" exclaimed the young monk.
- The elder monk smiled at him and told him "I left her on the other side of the road, why are you still carrying her".

Just like the young monk, we all carry forward so much suffering, so many memories, hate, pain, accomplishments, impressions, and we get into a vicious cycle:

- If we look at medical case histories we see that most of the diseases are because of carrying suppressed emotions, anger, envy etc. And these are of not just of one lifetime, but millions of births that we have taken.

- It is by the grace of the lord that we do not remember the past lifetimes, otherwise imagine, there is so much pain just with the memory of this lifetime, what would be our state if we could recall all!

Our mind is like a garden, due to our unawareness and ignorance a lot of weeds have grown, unwanted plants, poisonous plants, which are harmful for oneself and the garden of others:

- What we need to start doing is take the responsibility of a gardener. Our garden in its present shape is because of us. If we want beauty then start working.
- First start with chopping of the unwanted plants and start planting new seeds. This is the process of purification.
- Purpose of purification is so that we can have a beautiful garden, a beautiful mind, which bears delicious fruit, someone somewhere will eat it. Our mind is our responsibility, we need to understand that we need to clean it, otherwise it's no good for us and others.
- Just go on chopping unwanted plants and put good seeds, don't worry about the fruits and who will eat them and how tasty they will be. Just be the gardener.

Our Rishis, the great gardeners gave a structure to this gardening process, and they are called Samskaras:

- A Samskara is that which purifies. All that is required for a man to reach his highest evolution. It is a continuous process, birth to death.
- They laid down sixteen (16) Samskaras in the Vedas. Here we are interested with the fifteenth (15th) Samskara, which is 'Vivah' marriage.
- As mentioned before Marriage is a purification process, it is gardening, to create two beautiful gardens, to create two beautiful human beings, internally, who will benefit the world in the best possible way.

Marriage becomes a Samskara when it becomes internal. Marriage is not about sex, it is not about security, it is not about success, it has got nothing to do with anything outside. But we might ask, the wife or the husband is outside, how is it not about anything outside?

- In an ignorant marriage there are two, in a wise marriage there is only one. This is how it becomes purifying, marriage is the process of two becoming one.
- Because we do not have the ancient approach towards marriage it is what it is today. Instead of two becoming one, two have become many! Instead of purifying it has become polluting, one and many minds. All we need to do is to have a little understanding.

On one side there is a wise old man who has seen life and has all kinds of experiences, has made mistakes, has evolved, has found peace:

- On the other side you have a young chap, ignorant, driven by his impressions and false concepts of life and love.

Now, if we are disturbed, who do we go to for advice?

- Naturally to an evolved person or Guru. All our scriptures and Shastras are on the foundation of the highest truth realized by the great masters who left us these messages so that even we can see what they saw, so that even we can experience and realize the highest and come out of suffering by finding the Lord within.
- Unfortunately, we have chosen to listen to the younger chap, and we join him in his fatal errors and create a future of more suffering for all.

Marriage as a Samskara has certain code of conduct, certain rituals to be performed, however all of these are just sign boards pointing to the highest reality, and they carry deep meaning:

- One might think that they have performed all the rituals correctly and are steadfast in their daily religious activities, yet they are not at peace, why?

What purifies or pollutes the mind are not the actions, it's the intention behind the action. If your intentions are selfish they pollute. Krishna says in the Gita:

"The yogis, abandoning attachment, act with body, mind, and intelligence and even with the senses, only for the purpose of purification".

(Gita, Chapter 5, Verse 11)

Yoga means to unite. Unite the individual with the supreme. Marriage can be yoga. One, on this spiritual path is called a yogi:

- The yogi uses his God-given instruments of action, but restrains participation of ego ('I') as conceit ('me' and 'mine'), and thus acts without attachment and desire.
- Attachment (मोह) is the off-spring of desire; and then it gives birth to further desire. Attachment is not possible without desire, but desiring can be initiated without any prior prompting of attachment. This is because of ego's intrinsic inclination towards things material.
- Every time the conceited man entertains a desire, he puts a condition on himself that he will have to fulfil. Every desire is a burden that he will have to work out at some future time.
- Even a forgotten desire continues to lurk behind the screen of his sub-consciousness, ready at an opportune moment to ensnare its host and exact its dues.
- With every desire, man travels further from the natural peace of his soul, because desire's indiscriminate temperament makes him forget the purpose of his existence.
- He is led by attachment, born of desire, to cling to those things that are incompatible with his soul's nature; he prays for things that are even dangerous to its peace.
- The clear-sighted yogi, however knows that activity with attachment and desire is the harbinger of trouble and suffering, whereas activity without these disturbing elements reveals one's true duties, which

in turn purify the self and restore the permanent peace and bliss of the soul.

Hence, when you engage in selfless activity with awareness, you create no more impressions, cleaning starts happening within and disturbance of the mind reduces.

When the mind is silent the Lord can be seen:

- Marriage becomes purifying when the husband and wife see the divine in each other, when they serve and help each other selflessly.
- Whatever they do together becomes purifying when they both do it in awareness, when they both have understood the purpose of marriage and life.

More on understanding Samskaras

Samskara is a concept that all beings have past impressions resulting from previous lives and / or experiences that judges or guides one's present actions, shapes one's personality, and directs one's life. There are three types of Samskaras - Inborn, imposed, and acquired:

- Inborn are Samskaras carried from one's past life (lives) into the present life.
- Imposed are Samskaras that are brought upon through a young age from one's parents and surroundings.
- Acquired Samskaras are created from experiences and actions taken by one throughout his / her life.

Samskara is the driving force of this Time-space reality, and everyone is subject to this realm.

Samskara are formed in every individual by a number of ways. This includes perceptions (what one sees, hears, touches, tastes, and smells), chitta – cognition (what one feels and thinks), wilful actions, and also intentions before and during the action.

Samskara are the impressions and dispositions that develop and accumulate deep inside a person, from perception, inference, choices, preparation, practice, interaction with others, thoughts, intent, wilful actions and such karma.

- These manifest as habits, behaviour, tendencies, psychological predispositions and dispositions.
- Actions, studies, diligent preparation and inner resolutions trigger Sanskaras (hidden impressions or dispositions) - in the psyche of an individual, and these influence how the individual acts, perceives self and the manner in which the individual responds or accepts the karmic circumstances and the future.
- Every action, intent leaves an impression, impact and imprint in the deeper structure of human mind.
- This impression then awaits volitional fruition, in the form of hidden expectations, circumstances or unconscious sense of self-worth.

It manifests as tendency, karmic impulse, subliminal impression, habitual potency or innate dispositions.

- These impressions affect an individual's behaviour attributes i.e. the three *gunas* (*satogun*, *rajogun*, and *tamogun*).
- These tendencies, subtle traces and innate characteristics, continue to affect the person's present actions, assumptions, attitudes (*bhava*), mind (*buddhi*), moral response and interactions with everyone, everything and self.

Samskara is also defined as a perfecting, polishing, and purification process:

- Samskara, then, is the ongoing work of chipping away at our negative patterns to illuminate the purity of the soul.
- Like alchemists in our own transformation, we constantly refine and direct our Samskara into healthier designs.

- When starting a new pattern, or in times of stress, the lure of old patterns is strongest.
- Abhyasa (practice) helps make our new Samskara more powerful than the old; the more we reinforce the new groove, the stronger it becomes. Understanding what can trigger a relapse and rededicating ourselves to our practice keep us from backsliding.

All patterns, even Samskaras, represent order:

- When we leave an old pattern behind, we enter a liminal space, like no man's land, which is ripe with unlimited possibilities for new choices. This in-between space can be unsettling.
- We often resist new patterns for fear of losing the identities we have so carefully constructed.
- And it's true that when we change a long-held pattern, we undergo a rebirth of sorts. This rebirth hints at a new incarnation, a more evolved version of the self. Yet improving our Samskara brings us closer to our true nature, which is the goal of yoga.

The good news is that the ability to shift our patterns—once we have sown the seeds—is self-generating, self-sustaining, and self-renewing:

- When we're patient enough to facilitate Samskaras organic process, to honour its inner sound and slow rhythm, change simply flows.
- And it's a joy to taste the reward of all this hard work in its natural form, the sweetness that arises from seeing long labour and preparation come to fruition.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Grihastashrama

Unlike recent time, in the olden days in India there were no educational institutions:

- Young boys were sent to the forests and young girls would be taught at home by their parents.
- The boys would reside at the house of the Guru, this place was called 'Ashrama'. Ashrama means a place where we get protection.
- And what is protected is our inner peace, our state of mind. The outside situation might change or be the same, but because of the grace of the guru, we will be still.
- What we must learn is that outside situations are not the cause for our peace and happiness, it is what we have inside. If one can find peace within, then no calamity outside can disturb him.
- Ashrama was a place where one would learn this. The guru would teach the students how to live a life of Dharma.

Griha means Home, "sta" means 'to stay', so Grihasta would mean, one who stays at home:

- Now let's understand what home is. Home is a place where we are at peace. The only place where we will be at peace is deep within us, in our true self, when our mind is silent.
- We experience that when we are in deep sleep, we go home, but we are not aware of it. A Jnani or a Sadguru has realized his true self; he is settled in his 'self' that is why nothing outside bothers his peace.
- Grihasta is a man who is in tune with his real self, who works within the frame work of Grihasta Dharma, then, his life becomes Grihastashrama. When his evolution within compliments outside living, then it becomes Grihastashrama.

Marriage should be Grihastashrama, it should bring peace within to both husband and wife, and they in turn should work together to bring peace to the world:

- Grihastashrama involves certain code of conduct aligned with the purpose of purification and service.
- It is said that Grihastashrama is the best of all ashrams because it is the one that feeds the other ashrams.

Everything in Nature exists as an offering to everything else:

- The wind blows, expects nothing. The trees give shade, fruit, wood, and expect nothing. Rivers flow, and provide life to many, and expect nothing.
- This is *Yajna*. *Yajna* is not only the ritual but all our actions can be *Yajna*. Actions done selflessly that purifies oneself and benefits others is called Yajna.

A Grahasta is a Karma yogi, for whom Lord Krishna while explaining the nature of right action, has advocated a path of Spiritual Action by performing all works as oblations (*Yajna*):

“Worldly people are karmically bound by activities that differ from those performed as *Yajna* (religious rites); O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), labour thou, non-attached, in the spirit of *Yajna*, offering actions as oblations”.

(Gita, Chapter 3, Verse 9)

Worldly people perform actions with selfish motives and the desire to gain material profit and happiness:

- Owing to that inclination, they are karmically tied to the earth throughout successive incarnations.
- The yogi, however, strives to perform good actions in a spirit of selflessness and non-attachment; he thereby quickens his evolution toward soul freedom.

- All such liberating divine duties may be termed *Yajna*. *Yajna* is any selfless act or sacrifice offered solely to God. It is the religious rite in which the soul offers itself in the Fire of Spirit.

For a Grihasta the following five *Yajnas* are prescribed:

1. *Rishi Yajna*- Teaching about the higher reality.
2. *Pitru Yajna*- Taking care of parents and elders.
3. *Bhuta Yajna*- Taking care of animals.
4. *Deva Yajna*- Outwardly protecting nature, planting trees, etc. and inwardly offering life current from the senses, as sacrifices to soul.
5. *Manushya Yajna*- Serving other people in whatever way possible.

The formal rite of pouring into a fire clarified butter is symbolical of uniting life energy with cosmic energy:

- The initiate in guru-given yoga meditation performs the *esoteric* real fire rite enjoined by the Hindu scriptures.
- He withdraws his life force from the sensory and motor nerves and pours that energy into the sacred fires of life gathered in the seven occult cerebrospinal centres.

When the yogi switches off the life current from the nerves, he finds his mind disconnected from the senses. This act of withdrawing life from the body and uniting that energy with the light of God is the highest *Yajna*.

The true *exoteric* fire rite of life - by which the bodily life is united with the Cosmic Life, and the human mind and soul are united with the Cosmic Mind and Spirit - consists in offering right actions to God, without desire or attachment.

- These followers of right actions performed as *Yajna* do not remain tied to the earth, but are liberated.

This is what is required from a true Grihasta.

Spirituality in Marriage

Purpose of Marriage

(*The Four Purusharthas*)

Before we touch the main topic, let us try to understand the 'Purpose of Life':

Among the 108 Upanishads, the Mundaka Upanishad is regarded as one of the most important as it throws a flood of light on the *Jnana Marga* (the Path of Knowledge).

According to this Upanishad, Real Knowledge does not consist in the mastery of mere verbiage, but in the immediate experience of the Self.

Without this Self-Knowledge, it is futile to try to know anything else! Knowledge of the Self instantly means true knowledge of everything.

How is this Knowledge to be attained? *While yet engaged in the performance of his daily duties, the aspirant should carefully and minutely analyse the nature of the world, and grasp the transience of all objects. If everything is transient, what, then, is Eternal and, therefore, worth aspiring for?*

This question cannot be answered by the aspirants' intellect, for the intellect itself is a finite and frail instrument and one amongst the transient objects in this evanescent world.

But the emergence in the aspirants' mind of such a query is itself the signal that the heart-strands that bound him to Samsara (Objective World) have got loosened, and that with the sword of Jnana (Knowledge) he can easily cut them asunder.

This sword is in the Guru's (Realized Teacher) sheath and has to be acquired by direct personal initiation.

The Upanishad gives graphic descriptions of the effects of desire-prompted actions and shows *how the wrong performance of these actions brings on evil consequences and even the correct performance, while conferring temporary affluence and happiness, terminates in the reincarnation of the Jiva in even lower births. Desire is condemned in unequivocal terms.*

Practice of truth, penance, Brahmacharya (celibacy) and the acquirement of correct knowledge are the means that bestow strength on the aspirant—physical, mental, moral, intellectual and spiritual strength; and an aspirant endowed with this strength alone can reach the Goal—not a weakling, says the Upanishad.

The seeker of Truth, who has been blessed to understand the transient nature of this Samsara and reflects upon the inner contemplative message of the Vedas or other Scriptures, should immediately seek a fully realized teacher in order to realize the true and imperishable Brahm.

However, this realization is possible only under the guidance of a living realized teacher when we ourselves practice complete withdrawal of consciousness from the Objective World while living yet in human body and when we actually see the creation from the other side of the mirror of the Inner Mind at the forehead.

Only then the knot of ignorance which has caused us to believe that we are here as isolated individuals and the world is outside will be destroyed and we shall attain much sought real peace and happiness.

The message from the Mundaka Upanishad herein above clearly defines the purpose of human life.

What is Life? Why are we here? Why do we have to do anything, we are all going to die one day. Many more good questions and the answer is:

- Life by itself has no meaning, it's like water, and it just flows. What you make of it, what meaning you give it, it becomes that. If you say life is beautiful, it is beautiful, if you say life is a suffering, it is a suffering.

But, is it really in our hands, do we really have the power to choose what kind of a life we have:

- Yes, we can, only if we are aware. Only if we are conscious. Only if our decisions are not influenced by our impressions. And above all only by the grace of the Lord.

Like we mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of life, is to find permanent peace and happiness:

- If we can think of anything else, then we may put this question to our answer, 'what else'? We may say that is not the only purpose of life, it is also to achieve great things, help the world, become successful and rich, and so on and we will be happy then.
- Simple isn't it. But the Scriptures, reflecting upon the transient nature of the Objective World, advise us that these are all desire-

prompted actions and the wrong performance brings on evil consequences and even the correct performance, while conferring temporary affluence and happiness, terminates in the reincarnation of the Jiva in even lower births.

Now, don't get discouraged by this, we are not saying here not to do anything, we are saying that we don't have to do all that for peace and happiness:

- All we have to do for Real Peace and Happiness is just go within.

Now the big question - why go within? Possibly there can be two schools of thought regarding past life and after life.

The first school of thought would say that yes there is after life and there was past life:

- That means we have been here since the beginning of time. We have lived as all creatures. We have lived as a human being a million times. In those million or more births, we have played all roles, man, woman, husband, wife, son, daughter, uncle etc.
- We have lived in all parts of the world. We have eaten all types of food, we have had many women, we have endured all kinds of pain, suffered from all kinds of disease, we have committed all crime, done all good, and now we are here, this birth.
- Now because of the history we can say that this will continue for yet another million births, unless, we do that one thing that we haven't done in all the lives, that one thing, having done we would not take birth again, that one thing is, going within, finding our true self.
- Finding which we are freed from all bondages. Liberation. So, that proves that self-realization is the purpose of life according to the first school of thought.

The second school of thought would say that there is no after life, there was none, this is the only life we have and we need to make the most of it. Fair enough:

- If this is the only life, and we chose to live it, then we are actually free to do all we can, earn all we can, have as much as fun as we can.
- We want to be successful, we want to be rich, we want to be great, we want to be famous, we want love, we want happiness, and we want peace. But, whatever we get, won't last long.

This can be well understood from the life of Alexander the Great and the message he left for all of us while dying:

- Like any one of us even he desired. He wanted to conquer the world. Accumulate as much as wealth possible and become the most powerful.
- It went well for him in the beginning, and then he came to India and fell sick. He had to return. On his way back home he died.

Before dying he had three death wishes:

- First, that his coffin should be carried by his doctors there. Second, they should throw away the wealth that was won or stolen on the way. And third, that he should be buried with his hands out of the coffin.

The first wish was to say that even the best doctors of the world could not save him from death:

- We do not know when we will die, we go on doing things that our mind says, why do we do it? To silence the mind.
- So, the priority should be to silence the mind and not keep on following its dictates.

His second wish was to tell that all the wealth in the world was as good as stone to him now:

- If you are not peaceful what is the point if you are in a palace or have all the wealth of the world. His wealth could not buy him a single extra breath of life.

Thirdly, he wanted to say to the world, that the man who conquered the world, left the world empty handed:

- So if this is the only life, what is the greatest purpose?

That, we can learn from another great man, Buddha:

- A prince who had everything, yet felt incomplete. He renounced it all and set out on a search for a way out of suffering, after years he found it, within himself.
- The greatest bliss, contentment, infinite love and compassion, and true wisdom.

Therefore, from the above, we can summarize that, the purpose of life is self-realization:

- All our efforts should be focused to serve this purpose.

Now the question is, is getting married going to serve this purpose? If yes, how? **There is a reason why marriage was introduced and included as a Samskara:**

- The first stage of a boy's life was Brahmacharya, associated with the first fourteen Samskaras.
- The boy was being prepared for the highest reality, to realize the highest truth. At one end the boy would be undergoing education in the gurukul and the girl would be educated about the same time at home.
- After all the knowledge transfer from the great gurus and wise parents, as individuals they were still incomplete.

So no matter how much they evolved individually, there would be something missing, something that they cannot understand, and that something they will find after marriage:

- So the purpose of marriage is to complete a human being so that he can grow faster to be a divine being.

The purpose of marriage is to serve the purpose of life, as our great sages put it, the four Purusharthas. The term 'Purushartha' consists of two words, viz., Purusha and Artha. 'Purusha' means person or self. 'Artha' means aim or goal of human life:

- The concept of Purushartha basically indicates different values to be realized in human life through human efforts.
- There are four Purusharthas or aims of life as propounded by Manu, viz., *Dharma* (virtue), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (pleasure), and *Moksha* (liberation).

Today these Purusharthas have taken a new form and to an ordinary lay-man *Dharma* is equated with duty, *Artha* with money, *Kama* with pleasure, and *Moksha* with death.

We know that a man, like other living beings, acts instinctively; but he can also do so deliberately:

- This means he can consciously set before himself ends, and work for them. It is this conscious pursuit that transforms them into Purusharthas.

The four Purusharthas (*Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha*) are regarded in common parlance as the purposes of human life. They are given a worldly meaning:

- But their real meaning is spiritual. The foremost purpose of the four Purusharthas is to make man realise that his primary duty is to divinise himself (to transform himself from Man to God).
- Of the four Purusharthas, *Dharma* and *Moksha* are the one that man ought to seek but ordinarily does not; while *Artha* and *Kama* are the one that man is naturally inclined to seek.

The true meaning of Purusharthas:

- *Dharma*, is regarded in common usage as referring to actions like charity, the duties of one's *Ashrama* (stages in life), going on

pilgrimages and such other good deeds. But these relate only to external actions.

The true *Dharma* of every human being is to make every endeavour to realise the Divine. The duties do not constitute *Dharma* proper. *Dharma* should lead to self-realisation.

- *Artha* does not mean, as commonly understood, the accumulation of property and wealth. They may well become *anartha* (calamitous). They are not lasting. The acquisition of such wealth cannot be considered as *Purushartha*.

The real wealth that the man should acquire is the wisdom that is related to the Divine.

- The word *Kama* is generally associated with worldly desires and sensual pleasures.

But, when it is considered as the *Purushartha*--as one of the purposes of life--it relates to the yearning for God and not to mundane desires.

- The term *Moksha* is generally understood as referring to the means by which one reaches God or Heaven. But one can be in Heaven only for the period earned by one's meritorious deeds and at the end will have to be reborn again.

But *Moksha* in the true sense refers to a state in which nothing is lacking and there is no incoming or going out. It is a state without name or form. It is not a specific place to go to. It is the attainment of unity with the Divine.

Thus for every human being, the first task, among the four *Purusharthas*, must be to determine what is permanent and what is transient and seek the Eternal (*Dharma*):

- The second objective is the acquisition of the Divine Wisdom as the real wealth (*Artha*). The third is to develop faith in God and yearn for realisation of mergence in God (*Kama*). The fourth is *Moksha*,

the state of self-realisation in which there is no change and there is no movement.

This is the ultimate aim or goal of human life, however, in its worldly sense, there is a note of caution that addiction to any one Purushartha to the exclusion of other Purusharthas is bound to be disastrous:

- For example to think that one can lead a life of celibacy if brought up in complete isolation from sensual pleasures or if kept ignorant of them is a fallacy.
- This point is well illustrated in the story of Rishyasringa in the epic Mahabharata.

That is why all the Scriptures and the Saints advocate marriage as a safe bet for self-realization. A marriage should be on the foundation of *Dharma* and the other three purposes should be worked towards having *Dharma* as the base.

Marriage becomes liberating when both husband and wife have a common objective of going within.

The differences are outside and not within.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

The Principal Purushartha - Dharma

The word “Dharma” is derived from the Sanskrit root *dhri* which means to imbibe, to be supported by; to adopt or to sustain:

- The principle which sustains the entire universe and keeps it in equilibrium is Dharma.
- Some say that the world rests on the horns of a bullock. Others, that it is balanced on the forehead of ‘Shesh Nag’, the mythical snake.
- Guru Nanak in the Japji settles the issue by saying, “The world is sustained by Dharma, which springs out of mercy and is kept in harmony by contentment.”

धौलु धरमु दइआ का पूतु ॥ संतोखु थापि रखिआ जिनि सूति ॥

(*Adi Granth, Japji M1, Page 3: Line 13*)

Guru Nanak says that the mythical earth supporting bull symbolizes Dharma (righteousness or the moral code of life), which is born of God’s compassion for life on earth.

Guru Nanak further holds that it is God’s *Nam* (Word or *Shabd*) that creates and sustains not only the earth but the heavens and the netherworlds and makes everything function according to the prescribed duties that constitute its Dharma.

As Dharma is based on a keen sense of discrimination within the boundaries of the moral code, it brings peace and harmony to the system. Devoid of Dharma, life on earth would fall into chaos.

Religious scriptures have enumerated ten organs of Dharma:

Forgiveness, non-violence, mercy, sweetness,
Truth speaking, austerities and charities,
Character, purity and contentment,
Know them to be the ten organs of Dharma.

All creeds have their own principles but these are common to all.

Dharma is the treasure of all comforts and benefits all.

The *Nam* sustains all the religions and universes:

नाम के धारे सगले जंत ॥ नाम के धारे खंड ब्रह्मंड ॥
 नाम के धारे सिंप्रिति वेद पुरान ॥
 नाम के धारे सुनन गिआन धिआन ॥
 नाम के धारे आगास पाताल ॥ नाम के धारे सगल आकार ॥
 नाम के धारे पुरीआ सभ भवन ॥ नाम कै संगि उधरे सुनि स्ववन ॥
 करि किरपा जिसु आपनै नामि लाए ॥
 नानक चउथे पद महि सो जनु गति पाए ॥५॥

(*Adi Granth, Gauri M5, Page 284: 11-14*)

Those who are fond of *Nam*, to them *Nam* is Dharma, which sustains everything:

- As conscious co-workers of *Nam*, they follow its principles and surrender to His will. They in a way get connected with Dharma. They live by Dharma. They are Dharma incarnate.

मंनै सुरति होवै मनि बुधि ॥ मंनै सगल भवण की सुधि ॥
 मंनै मुहि चोटा ना खाइ ॥ मंनै जम कै साथि न जाइ ॥
 ऐसा नामु निरंजनु होइ ॥ जे को मंनि जाणै मनि कोइ ॥१३॥

मंनै मारगि ठाक न पाइ ॥ मंनै पति सिउ परगटु जाइ ॥
 मंनै मगु न चलै पंथु ॥ मंनै धरम सेती सनबंधु ॥
 ऐसा नामु निरंजनु होइ ॥ जे को मंनि जाणै मनि कोइ ॥१४॥

मंनै पावहि मोखु दुआरु ॥ मंनै परवारै साधारु ॥
 मंनै तरै तारे गुरु सिख ॥ मंनै नानक भवहि न भिख ॥
 ऐसा नामु निरंजनु होइ ॥ जे को मंनि जाणै मनि कोइ ॥१५॥

(*Adi Granth, Japji M1, Page 3: 6-11*)

According to the *Vishnu Purana*, Dharma has four main tenets:

1. *Sat*, which means truthfulness.
2. *Yajna*, which literally means sacrifice, but esoterically refers to the practice of charity implying love for God and His creation.
3. *Puja*, which means worship, good conduct, cleanliness of body and mind.
4. *Simran*, or the repetition of the holy names.

Guru Ravidas says to the same effect:

सतजुगि सतु तेता जगी दुआपरि पूजाचार ॥
तीनौ जुग तीनौ दिँडे कलि केवल नाम अधार ॥१॥

In *Satyuga* Truth, in *Treta Yajna* sacrifices,
And in *Dwapar* worship and piety reigned supreme.
After the three Yugas they fell into abuse
And in *Kaliyuga* one's only mainstay is the *Nam*.
(*Adi Granth, Gauri Ravidas, Page 346: 11*)

Bhai Mani Singh, however, has described the four tenets of Dharma as follows:

1. *Nam, Shabd, or Sound Current*.
2. *Charity*, which comprises mercy and sacrifice, to wish well of all with the heart, to forgive, to consider all wealth as belonging to the Lord and enjoy it by sharing it with all.
3. *Snan, (Bathing)*, esoterically it comprises worship, good conduct and cleanliness; to withdraw the mind from wrong ways such as falsehood, violence and cheating; to withdraw the intellect from evil thoughts and rid the reason of doubts; and to still the mind and collect the consciousness at the Third Eye.
4. *Gyan or knowledge*, which is the achievement of Truth.

Guru Ram Das says that when the mind gets fixed, all the four feet are achieved by the seeker:

आसा महला ४ ॥
सतजुगि सभु संतोष सरीरा पग चारे धरमु धिआनु जीउ ॥
(*Adi Granth, Asa M4, Page 445: 6-7*)

In the Satyuga all were embodiments of contentment.
The Dharma then rested on all fours.

The comprehensive name for the above virtues is humanity:

- This is the appearance of the virtues of the eternal One and His knowledge in the mind, intellect, reason, action and speech in a pure-hearted person who wishes well of everybody.
- He, out of grace and compassion, does not mind the faults of people, lightens their burdens of hardships and sufferings and strengthens their souls.

Dharma comprises those deeds, by knowing and rightly performing which, peace in the world and union with the Lord is obtained:

- Those actions which benefit either the doers or others are included in Dharma, but not if they lead to sufferings.

The true criterion for recognizing Dharma is also the same:

- If suffering results from observing Dharma, there is some mistake in understanding it.

For worldly progress our duty consists in performing the actions that we remain within the bounds of laws of the caste and society and sustain each other so that society may not split asunder:

- The rules of this path include bodily, family, social, national and political rules.
- Similarly, the path of spiritual progress and emancipation has its laws. It comprises pure detachment.

Sant Mat gives true guidance, both in worldly and spiritual matters, and while strengthening the human virtues, turns his thoughts to his Lord and takes him to Him.

'Dharate uddharyate iti dharma'

That which protects and helps evolve is Dharma.

Dharma is the Truth! Dharma is reality. Dharma is that which protects your peace, it is the promise of Dharma.

****Dharma Rakshati Rakshitaha****

You protect it, it protects you. There is no disturbance in a life led on the foundation of Dharma.

*Nehabhikramanaso 'sti pratyavayo na vidyate
svalpam apy asya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat*

In this path there is no loss of the unfinished effort for realization, nor is there creation of contrary effects.

Even a tiny bit of this real religion protects one from great fear.

(Gita, Chapter II, Verse 40)

For those who embrace this “real religion”, Dharma, there is no waste of any holy effort:

- It is a surer protection to live under the canopy of truth than to expose oneself on the open fields of error.
- Even a little practice of Dharma will bring relief from the dire disease of ignorance and its sufferings.

The last sentence of this Gita verse is a message of encouragement to devotees who, having entered the spiritual path, have not yet achieved any noticeable progress:

- In the material world, all successes are known by their tangible, though often short-lasting, results.
- But in the spiritual path all results, being primarily psychological, are intangible. They are actually real and everlastingly beneficial.
- Spiritual results begin as subtle transformations in the consciousness of the inner being. They are to be measured according to their peace-giving qualities.
- When a devotee meditates deeply, he is bound to feel an ever-increasing peace, which, after all, is more precious than any worldly possession.

The practice of Dharma can never produce harmful effects; whereas certain formal religious rites may produce no results or wrong results if performed with even the slightest inaccuracy:

- Right methods of meditation can never produce untoward results. Wrong methods, of course are not beneficial – whether in meditation or in anything else.

Saints have declared that if a person, even once, really desires salvation, that desire is firmly planted in the superconscious mind; no matter how long ignored, it will germinate when favourable opportunity arises, whether in this life or in a later incarnation:

- So the devotee should remember that even a momentary longing for union with the Lord may ultimately mean his freedom from the karmic prison of births and deaths.
- Someday, some life, each man or woman must take that first divine step.

This stanza does not mean, of course, that a little meditation will ensure freedom from cosmic delusion:

- The Gita simply points out that it is far better to *start* on the path of eternal safety by meditation than to remain on the death-ending material plane of thought.

If even the mere desire for liberation ultimately leads one to liberation, as the sages promise, it is obvious that determined, steady efforts at meditation must immensely quicken one's spiritual evolution.

Until the desire for liberation is first awakened in the heart, and fulfilled by meditation, salvation is impossible even though one passes through innumerable incarnations.

As already said earlier, a marriage should be on the foundation of *Dharma* and the other three purposes of *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha* should be worked towards having *Dharma* as the base.

Marriage becomes liberating when both husband and wife have a common objective of going within.

As already pointed out, the differences are outside and not within. And to resolve such differences, if any, the best advice for maintaining peace and harmony in married life is to follow the saying:

“Raat Gayi, Baat Gayi”

- The differences of today should not be carried on to the next day.

Those who follow this Dharma can very easily pursue their common objective of going within.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Interrelationship of the Four Purusharthas

(*The Story of Rishyasringa from the Mahabharata*)

The Story of Rishyasringa from the Mahabharata precisely brings to light an important insight regarding the interrelationship of the four Purusharthas.

Lomasa Narrates the Story

The Pandavas during their exile went on a pilgrimage and reached an Ashrama (hermitage) called Punnyam at the bank of river Kaushiki. At that time, the sage Lomasa, the head of that hermitage, told Yudhishtira this Story of Rishyasringa. It may be summed up as follows:

Once upon a time there was a severe famine for want of rain in the kingdom of Anga. How to save the country from this famine became a matter of serious concern for the king:

- The only way out, according to the Brahmanas who advise the king on such matters, was to fetch Rishyasringa, the young sage, to the kingdom.

Rishyasringa lived in a forest and led a life of perfect celibacy. By his austerities, he had acquired the power to bring down rain wherever he went. He lived with his father Vibhandaka.

- In such a systematic manner did Vibhandaka bring up his son in the seclusion of the forest that he did not come in touch with any other human being, man or woman!

Now, to bring Rishyasringa from such a seclusion to the kingdom so that there would be enough rain was a real problem for Lomapada, the king of Anga:

- After a series of consultations with his courtiers, the king finally decided to send the most charming courtesans of the city to lure Rishyasringa to Anga.

Well equipped for the mission, the damsels set out in a boat which looked like a floating hermitage and reached the river near Vibhandaka's hermitage:

- Mooring the boat in the river, the damsels entered the periphery of the hermitage. Having secretly ascertained the time when Vibhandaka would be away, one of the beautiful damsels Vaisali, entered the hermitage.
- And she accosted Rishyasringa the way the rishis (sages) of those days used to: "How are you? Are the penances of the rishis of the forest proceeding satisfactorily? How is your study of the Vedas progressing...?"

Never before did Rishyasringa behold such a beautiful human form and hear such a sweet voice:

- The moment he beheld this graceful woman, though without knowing that it was a woman! The instinctive urge for the company of the opposite sex began to work on his mind. The youthful anchorite thought that she was a young sage like himself.

"You seem to be a bright brahmacharin (celibate). Who are you? Where is your hermitage? I bow to you. What are the austerities you practice?"
Thus saying, he rendered her the customary offerings:

- But she said to him: "I am not worthy to receive your prostrations, but let me reciprocate your greetings and salutations in the manner we are used to".
- So saying, she embraced him warmly, gave him fruits and sweets, decorated him with perfumed garlands, and served him with drinks. Embracing him again, she then gently slipped out of the hermitage fearing the return of the sage Vibhandaka, but actually saying that it was time for her Agnihotra sacrifice.

On return Vibhandaka found that the face of his hermitage as well as the face of his son were clouded and disturbed as if by a storm of passion. He was shocked to see that the usual simple duties of the hermitage had been neglected. Vibhandaka was very much troubled and asked his son to explain what had happened.

In his simplicity and ingenuity, Rishyasringa replied: "A brahmacharin of wonderful form was here. The beauty and sweetness of 'his' voice defy description. Listening to 'him' and looking into 'his' eyes filled my inner being with indescribable joy and affection. When 'he' embraced me - which it seems is 'his' customary greeting - I felt a kind of happiness that I have never felt before, no, not even while eating the sweetest fruits. I long for 'his' company; my heart pants to see 'him'...."

When Rishyasringa had thus brokenly expressed his new yearnings and disturbances, Vibhandaka understood what had taken place:

- He told his son that it was no brahmacharin but a malignant demon bent on beguiling them and hindering their penances and austerities. So he advised his son not to let such demons come near him.
- Vibhandaka then combed the whole forest in vain for three days on end to find his son's fair visitors and returned baffled.

Then on another occasion when Vibhandaka had gone out to bring roots and fruits Vaisali again stole into the hermitage:

- As soon as Rishyasringa saw her he jumped up and ran to greet her gushingly, like pent up water surges out of a reservoir that has sprung a leak.
- Even without waiting for prompting this time, Rishyasringa went near her and after the customary salutations said: "**O, shining brahmacharin, before my father returns let us go to your hermitage.**"

This was precisely what she had hoped for and worked for. So together they went and entered the boat which had been made to look like a hermitage and sailed for the kingdom of Anga:

- When they reached Anga, the young sage surely knew more about the world and its ways than he had done in the forest.

The heartiest of welcomes awaited him in Anga. The king was delighted to see Rishyasringa. And, as foretold by the Brahmanas, the moment Rishyasringa set his foot in Anga rain began to pour down, the rivers

and lakes were full and the people rejoiced. The king gratefully gave his daughter Santa in marriage to Rishyasringa.

Thus all ended as had been planned. The king, however, felt uneasy because he feared Vibhandaka's wrath. The sage might come in search of his son and pronounce a curse on the king:

- Therefore, in order to mollify Vibhandaka, the king lined the route the sage would take with cattle and kind and instructed the cowherds in charge to tell Vibhandaka that they were all Rishyasringa's servants and had come to welcome and honour their master's father and to wait on him.

Guessing his son's whereabouts right, Vibhandaka crossed intervening rivers and villages and marched to the capital of Anga as if to burn the king in his anger:

- But when he saw at every stage of his journey the magnificent cattle which belonged to his son and the respectful welcome by his son's servants, his angry mood melted away. A great welcome awaited him in the capital.
- In the king's palace he was pleased to see his son with his beautiful wife Santa seated in state like the king of the gods in heaven.
- Vibhandaka blessed the king and he asked his son to join him in the forest after the birth of a son. **Rishyasringa did as his father bade him.**

The story ends with this note: "Like Damayanti and Nala, Sita and Rama, Arundhati and Vashishtha, Lopamudra and Agastya", **Santa and Rishyasringa retired to the forest in the fullness of time and spent their lives in mutual love and worship of God.**

In this story there are at least two things that strike us. First, there is a lighter side to the story. Secondly, it gives us a message.

1) The Lighter Side

We begin to laugh when we listen to how Rishyasringa describes the new brahmacharin to his father. No fault of Rishyasringa, for it is his father who made him ignorant of opposite sex and *Kama*.

We also observe that even Vibhandaka, the father, was not free from *Kama* and *Artha*:

- By his austerities he was supposed to have gained control over his feelings. Though he was red with anger at the loss of his son, we see that his anger subsided and gradually replaced by satisfaction at the sight of the wealth and prosperity of his son.
- But Vibhandaka is redeemed from this ridicule because it is said that instead of staying and enjoying with his son, he returned to the forest and directed his son to follow him later.

2) The Message

Thus, the object of laughter in this story becomes a message for us. The moral is this:

- To think that one can lead a life of celibacy if brought up in complete isolation from sensual pleasures or if kept ignorant of them is a fallacy.
- In spite of all the precautions Vibhandaka took, at the slightest provocations the natural instinct came out with all its might. So the pointlessness of such precautions is obvious.

Hence addiction to any one Purushartha to the exclusion of other Purusharthas is bound to be disastrous. The Story of Rishyasringa makes this point abundantly clear.

If it is not desirable to pursue one Purushartha at the expense of the other Purusharthas, then the question of how the various Purusharthas are interrelated becomes crucial. And the answer is already given on page 33 herein above and it is worthwhile to repeat it hereunder:

“Thus for every human being, the first task, among the four Purusharthas, must be to determine what is permanent and what is transient and seek the Eternal (*Dharma*):

- The second objective is the acquisition of the Divine Wisdom as the real wealth (*Artha*). The third is to develop faith in God and yearn for realisation of mergence in God (*Kama*). The fourth is *Moksha*,

the state of self-realisation in which there is no change and there is no movement.

This is the ultimate aim or goal of human life. A marriage should be on the foundation of *Dharma* and the other three purposes should be worked towards having *Dharma* as the base."

And this is what Santa and Rishyasringa exactly did when they retired to the forest in the fullness of time and spent their lives in mutual love and worship of God, as also advised by Vibhandaka.

Seclusion from the society does not help and that is why the Saints advocate a married way of life as the best bet for self-realization.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Process and Spiritual Meaning

We shall now try to understand the meaning of some of the rituals performed in the Hindu marriage ceremony:

- These rituals like the stories are sign boards that point towards the higher. Now, the rituals vary from place to place so we have just taken a few important rituals.
- These rituals were formed bearing in mind the truth about marriage and that the bride and groom meaningfully perform it bearing in mind its purpose.
- The primary attitude towards the marriage ceremony is not that a man and woman are getting married but two divine beings are coming together.
- The groom was seen as Lord Vishnu himself and the bride was considered Goddess Lakshmi. And the rituals were performed with great respect and devotion.
- It was believed that the gods were witness to the marriage ceremony.

Hindu Marriage Ceremony

The most important element of any Hindu ceremony is Agni (Fire):

- Agni is considered the purest. It symbolizes the supreme lord. All the other elements can be polluted but not fire.
- Agni also represents wisdom, that which burns ignorance. Hence, Agni as the witness, meaning the lord as the witness, they start the ritual.
- The Agni in a marriage ceremony is called 'Yojaka Agni'. Yojaka means unite. It means to say that the man and the woman will be united by the grace of the lord.

Below is a brief discussion of some of the main rituals:

Kanyadaan

Kanyadaan is performed on the main day function of the wedding. It is performed by the father of the bride, wherein he entrusts his daughter to the groom. In the absence of the father, Kanyadaan is performed by an elderly relative or member of the family.

This way the father gives her daughter as a gift to the groom. As per tradition, groom is considered a form of Lord Vishnu, whereas the girl represents the goddess of wealth Lakshmi. The parents offer their daughter to the groom, who is their most cherished gift.

In the general practice of charity or giving a gift one loses what he has. But in Kanyadaan the parents do not lose their daughter but gain a son and along with him his family members.

Arundhati Nakshatra Darshana

Rishi Vashishtha and Arundhati were an ideal couple. Arundhati was a '*Pativartha*' and to advise the new bride to live a life of a '*Pativartha*' is the purpose of Arundhati Nakshatra Darshana.

Let us try to understand what *Pativartha* means. It just doesn't mean being loyal to the husband and taking care of him. Seeing the lord himself in the husband and serving him with the intention of serving the lord is a real *Pativartha*.

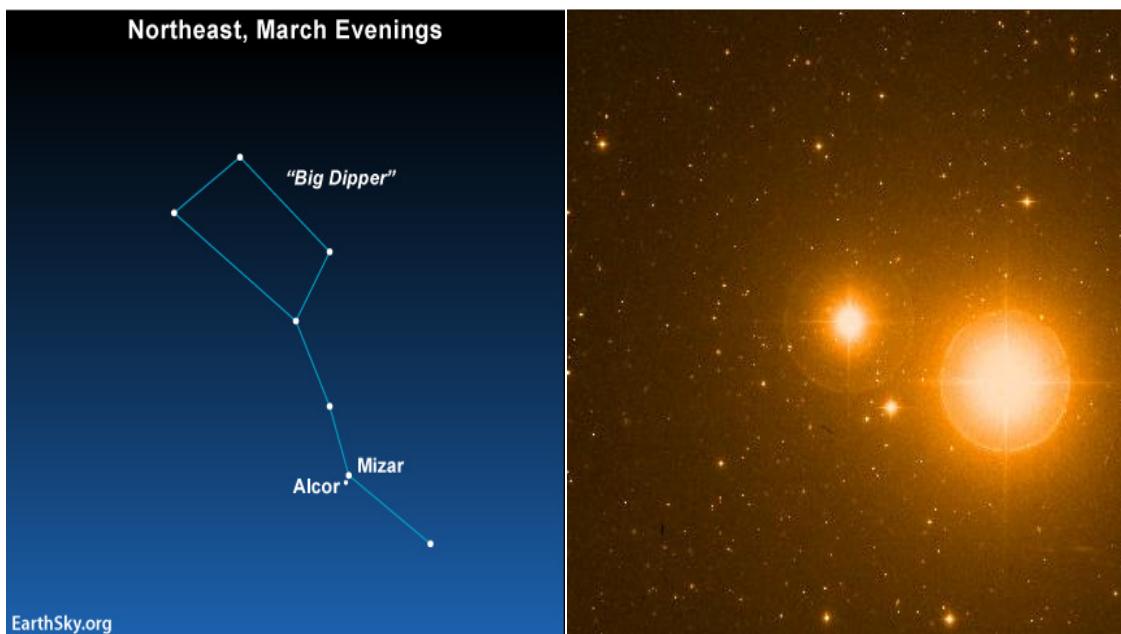
Arundhati, wife of Sage Vashishtha, one of the seven sages (Saptarishis), is famous for her chastity, piety and single-minded devotion for her husband. Due to her devoutness and faithfulness, she became a star in the sky known as Arundhati Nakshatra. The epic 'Mahabharata' mentions that there is no one as devout and faithful as Arundhati.

Agni, the god of fire, lusts for union with the wives of the Saptarishis. But it is undoable for him to fulfil this desire. His wife Svaha, therefore impersonates the wives of the rishis and makes love with Agni in their form or '*rupas*'. But it is impossible for her to impersonate Arundhati,

the wife of Vashishtha. Her loyalty towards her husband is so strong that no other man can even *think* otherwise of her.

It is this remarkable loyalty and love towards her husband that makes her an ideal to be followed for the newly-weds. And there is no moment better than the marriage time to impact the idea of unwavered faith, loyalty, love and devotion in the minds of newly-weds.

Astronomically, Arundhati (Alcor) is one of the double stars. It is comparatively dimmer and attached to the star Vashishtha (Mizar), one of the members of the seven bright stars (Saptarishis), lying in second position from the tail end, as seen in the Big Dipper constellation (Ursa Major).



Located in the handle of the Big Dipper, Mizar (brighter) and Alcor (fainter) are one of the most famous visual double stars in the sky.

There is an interesting bit of information about this particular pair. Mostly a binary star system has a Primary star and a Secondary star, with the latter revolving around the former.

But this particular binary star system is the first ever known pair of stars that orbit each other, implying that a husband and wife should be like **Vashishtha and Arundhati – an ideal couple**. No one is supposed to go around the other. Both the husband and wife have to move together to have a good family life.

Small things like these, which our ancestors have kept in our rituals, actually show how forward they were in their thinking. Right from time immemorial, we have been taught that both the man and the wife have EQUAL importance and responsibility in the family.

Mizar and Alcor appear so closely linked in our sky's dome that they're often said to be a test of eyesight. But in fact even people with less than perfect eyesight can see the two stars, especially if they're looking in a dark clear sky. This pair of stars in the Big Dipper's handle is famously called "the horse and rider."

Mizar is perhaps the Big Dipper's most famous star, glorified in the annals of astronomy many times over. Apart from Alcor, Mizar in itself became known a double star in 1650. In fact, it was the first double star to be seen through a telescope.

Thus Mizar and Alcor not only test eyesight, but the limits of our technological vision as well.

Another belief is that those people who are nearing their death cannot witness Arundhati Nakshatra. It is also believed that if a person is able to witness the Nakshatra then death will not approach him for next six months.

Tying the Mangal Sutra

Mangal means auspicious, sutra means knot. This is the process of tying the holy thread around the bride's neck with three knots.

The Shloka goes:

*Mangalyam Tantunanena mama jeevana hetuna
Khante badname Shubhage tvam jeeva sharadamshatam*

This is a sacred thread essential for my life, I tie this around your neck for my life's purpose, O auspicious maiden, and may you live happily for a hundred years.

The purpose of the union is for realizing the 'self', and wishing hundred years is wishing immortality. The 'self' has no birth and death,

and when one is liberated he becomes immortal realizing he is only pure consciousness, pure awareness.

The groom ties the holy thread as a symbol of their union in *Karmana* (action), *Vaacha* (speech) and *Mansa* (mind), that is why the three knots:

- To say that in action they will be one, they will be on the path of *Dharma*.
- In speech they will be one, they will speak the truth and about the truth.
- And finally in mind they will be one, they both have the same goal, the same Supreme Lord to reach.

Saptapadi

All these rituals are meant so that we discover something within. This is our journey of self-discovery. It is said, death is known by dying. The truth is known by diving deep within us.

But how do we dive within? How do we find the truth within? There are two paths as Krishna says in the Gita:

श्री भगवान् उवाच
लोकेस्मिन् द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता ॥या अनघ ।
ज्ञानयोगेन संख्यानं कर्मयोगेन योगिनं ॥
(Gita Chapter III, Verse 3)

The Blessed Lord said: O sinless one, at the onset of creation, a twofold way of salvation was given by me to this world: for the wise, divine union through wisdom; for the yogis, divine union through active meditation.

Commonly interpreted, *Jnana Yoga* is the way of knowledge and discrimination; *Karma Yoga*, the way of right action - spiritual and meditative. The way of discrimination is for the rare, keen-eyed wise man; for all others, the path of activity and meditation combined.

Ultimate knowledge of God is the goal of human freedom, but this final all-satisfying lore cannot be attained without having practiced the right method of meditation. Scriptural knowledge is gainful only when it

produces the desire to demonstrate in one's own life the validity of the spiritual precepts.

God-wisdom is not attained by such religious activities as trying to save others' souls without having first achieved one's own salvation. No devotee should be satisfied with untested beliefs and dogmas, but should engage himself in practical efforts to attain God-realization.

Saptapadi is actually a *Sadhana*. The term *sadhana* means spiritual exertion towards an intended goal. *Dhana* means wealth and *sadhana* means spiritual wealth. Purpose of *sadhana* is to earn seven spiritual wealth as follows:

1. *Sama*

To restrain the mind from wandering towards sense objects is *Sama*. *Sama* consists in not allowing the mind to externalize.

2. *Dama*

The sense organs are directed outwards, toward the sense objects; so they naturally seek out sense objects. Diverting the sense organs and organs of action away from the sense objects is *Dama*. *Dama* is complimentary to *Sama* in that, success in *Dama* enhances *Sama*.

3. *Uparati*

It consists in not thinking of things of the senses. Most of our time is spent in thinking about sense-objects, things which we have seen or we have heard, which we shall see or shall hear, things which we have eaten or are eating or shall eat, places where we have lived and so on. We think of them or talk of them most of our time.

One who wishes to go within should develop uplifting thoughts and intense desire for the highest reality.

4. *Titiksha*

It is the ideal forbearance. Forbearance of all misery, without even a thought of resisting or driving it out, without even any painful feeling in the mind or any remorse - this is *Titiksha*.

Cultivating the ability to tolerate the dualities of life; like heat and cold, pain and pleasure, profit and loss, friend and foe, honour and disgrace etc. is *Titiksha*. These dualities are a part of life. Spiritual discipline becomes impossible by being agitated by these dualities.

5. *Shraddha*

The next qualification required is *Shraddha*, faith. One must have tremendous faith in God. Until he has it, he cannot aspire to be a *Jnani*.

The Lord cannot be understood by inference or any physical or mental effort. The Lord has to be understood only through faith. In the words of Swami Vivekananda:

“A great sage once told me that not one in twenty millions in this world believe in God. I asked him why, and he told me, “Suppose there is a thief in this room, and he gets to know that there is a mass of gold in the next room, and only a very thin partition between the two rooms; what will be the condition of the thief?”

“I answered, “He will not be able to sleep at all; his brain will be actively thinking of some means of getting at the gold, and he will think of nothing else.

“Then he replied, “Do you believe that a man could believe in God and not go mad to get Him? If a man sincerely believes that there is that immense, infinite mine of Bliss and that it can be reached, would not that man go mad in his struggles to reach it?”

Strong faith in God and the consequent eagerness to reach Him constitutes *Shraddha*.

6. *Samadhana*

Then comes *Samadhana* or constant practice to hold the mind in God. The mind can be conquered only by slow and steady practice.

Seating the mind firmly in the Lord is *Samadhana*. *Samadhana* is great patience. One who is patient is always victorious.

7. *Mumukshutva*

Mumukshutva is the intense desire to be free. All the misery we have is of our own choosing; such is our nature:

- We run headlong after all sorts of misery, and are unwilling to be freed from them. Every day we run after pleasure and before we reach it, we find it is gone; it has slipped through our fingers.

- Still we do not cease from our mad pursuit, but on and on we go, blinded fools that we are.

As born slaves to nature, money and wealth, wives and children, we are always chasing a wisp of straw, mere chimeras, and going through an innumerable round of lives without obtaining what we seek.

We seek all these to be happy and never meet with misery, but the more we go towards happiness, the more it goes away from us:

- And if we study our own lives, we find how little of happiness there is in us, and how little in truth we have gained in the course of the wild-goose-chase of the world.

It is because happiness and misery are the obverse and reverse of the same coin, he who takes happiness must take misery also:

- We all have this foolish idea that we can have happiness without misery, and it has taken such possession of us that we have no control over the senses.

The majority of men have more or less undeveloped brains. One in a million we see with a well-developed brain.

Few men realize that with pleasure there is pain, and with pain, pleasure; and as pain is disgusting, so is pleasure, as it is the twin-brother of pain:

- Both should be turned aside by men whose reason is balanced. Why will not men seek freedom from being played upon?

The sage wants liberty; he finds that sense-objects are all vain and that there is no end to pleasures and pains:

- When a man begins to see the vanity of worldly things, he will feel he ought not to be thus played upon or borne along by nature. That is slavery.

When one realizes all this slavery, then comes the desire to be free; and intense desire comes. If a piece of burning charcoal were placed on a man's head, see how he struggles to throw it off:

- Similar will be the struggles for freedom of a man who really understands that he is a slave of nature. **This is what Mumukshutva or the desire to be free is.**

Nityanitya-viveka – discriminating between that which is true and that which is untrue, between the eternal and the transitory:

- God alone is eternal everything else is transitory. Everything dies; the angel's die, humans die, animal's die, earth's die, sun, moon and stars – all die; everything undergoes constant change. The mountains of today were the oceans of yesterday and will be oceans tomorrow.

Everything is in state of flux; the whole universe is a mass of change:

- But there is One who never changes, and that is God; and the nearer we get to Him, the less will be the change for us, the less will nature be able to work on us; and when we reach Him, and stand with Him, we shall conquer nature, we shall be masters of these phenomena of nature, and it will have no effect on us.

Saptapadi means "Seven steps". After tying the Mangal Sutra, the couple take seven steps around the holy fire, which is called Saptapadi. After the seventh step, the couple legally become husband and wife.

Seven promises are associated with seven steps. Promises that the couple do to each other and promises they together do to the Lord to achieve the four goals of life - *Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha*.

- Holding of hand symbolizes responsibility, and walking around fire is their pledge and commitment that they are serious to achieve the goals of life.
- Fire is symbolic of the purest, it represents light, wisdom.

The Seven Vows

Both the bride and the groom make Seven Vows to each other. These vows are in Sanskrit with meaning as follows:

Phera 1 **Blessing for nourishing food and noble and respectful life**

Groom:

"Om esha ekapadi bhava iti prathaman"

I will love, cherish and provide for you and our children. You will support me and offer me food.

Bride:

"Dhanam dhanyam pade vadet"

I will honour you. I take upon myself the responsibilities of the house and children.

Exoteric (Vow 1)

The couple invoke the gods for plentitude of food and other household goods. This is a prayer and a promise, where survival needs are addressed. *Artha* through *Dharma*.

This relates to *Muladhara* chakra located at base of the spine and spiritual plane *Bhuloka*, the home of creative vibratory element *Earth*:

- It has a 4-petal lotus. It is our Earth World, the physical plane, the world perceived through the five senses, also called the gross plane, as it is the densest of the worlds.

The body of man is viewed as a microcosm of the entire divine creation. Microcosm refers to the internal source of something larger or more external (macrocosm). The microcosm precedes the macrocosm:

- Thus, the guiding principle of the *Bhuloka* comes from the six higher lokas. Consciousness precedes physical form.

In the physical plane one gets knowledge of objects through the five *Jnana-Indriyas* or organs of knowledge, viz., ears, eyes, tongue, nose and skin.

In the mental plane or heaven one does not hear, see and feel by separate and finite organs:

- One gets a *Divya Chakshu* or divine eye, an extraordinary new power or faculty. One can hear, see, feel and know everything of an object instantaneously, through this new mental eye.
- One gets an accurate and perfect knowledge of all objects. One is not deceived or misled by any external appearance. There is no misunderstanding.

***Bhuloka* is at the base of the left channel. It controls the pelvic plexus and gives innocence of a child:**

- This controls, energizes and strengthens the whole visible physical body, especially the spine, the production and the quality of blood produced, the adrenal glands, and the tissues of the body, the internal and external sexual organs.

***Muladhara* chakra is associated with human qualities of individuality, egoism, physicality (including sexuality), materialism and dominance:**

- A person lives predominantly in this chakra during the first seven years of life, acquiring language skills, relationships and cultural ways.

Brief Description of Spiritual Planes

The entire universe is body of God, the Cosmos, and Macrocosm. Man is Microcosm of the Macrocosm and thus carries the entire universe within him.

- The universe as experienced and viewed from *Bhuloka*, is thus collective projection of all mankind and the weather inside is the weather outside.

There are fourteen spiritual planes. The space between the head and the base of spine represents the seven *lokas* while the space from hips to under the foot represents the seven *talas*:

- Head is *Satyaloka*, forehead is *Tapaloka*, throat is *Janaloka*, heart is *Maharloka*, navel is *Svargaloka*, pelvis is *Bhuvaloka*, and base of the spine is *Bhuloka*.
- Correspondingly, hips are *Atala*, thighs are *Vitala*, knees are *Sutala*, shanks are *Talatala*, ankles are *Mahatala*, over the foot is *Rasatala*, and under the foot is *Patala*.

Distinction between *lokas* and *talas* has been made as upper part and lower part of body at base of the spine:

- *Lokas* above the base of spine are spiritual planes of increasing purity and bliss.
- *Talas* below the base of spine are material planes of decreasing purity and increasing suffering.

Of these seven *loka-tala* pairs, the three highest belong to the relatively *arupa* (formless) or spiritual worlds, and are often called *arupa lokas* and *arupa talas*:

- The four lowest pairs belong to the *rupa* (form) or material worlds, and are often called *rupa lokas* and *rupa talas*.

These *lokas* and *talas* are not placed in nature's structure above each other like steps of a stair, but are within each other, interblending and continually interacting as our consciousness moves in and out or up and down:

- Each inner one is finer and more ethereal than the next outer one; the inmost of either series is the most ethereal and spiritual of all.
- For each *loka* there is an exactly corresponding *tala*, and in fact, the *tala* is the nether pole or south pole of its corresponding *loka*.

Each plane has its own matter of an appropriate degree of density, which interpenetrates the matter of the plane next below it:

- The astral plane, or *Bhuvaloka*, interpenetrates the earth plane and extends for some distance beyond it.

- The mental plane interpenetrates the astral but also extends further into space than does the latter.

The vibrations of the astral world are more rapid or quicker than those of the physical plane:

- The vibrations of the causal plane are more rapid or quicker than those of the astral plane. The vibrations of the *Satyaloka* are more rapid or quicker than those of the causal plane.
- In each plane the soul develops a new and higher sense of power. When we pass from one plane to another we do not move in space. We simply change our consciousness. We change our focus of consciousness.

Back to *Artha* through *Dharma*

Artha in worldly sense is acquisition of wealth and possessions in the material world and without *Dharma* becomes *anartha* as under:

It implies slipping of our consciousness from *Muladhara* chakra to its South Pole and its engagement at 'Under the Foot' known as *Patala*:

- This will automatically invoke the inherent features of *Patala* viz. Murder, Malice, Material Enchantment, Gratification of Senses and Conceit ('me' and 'mine').
- This is the Objective World and the state of this *tala* corresponds to the consciousness of most humans on earth.

***Patala* is the Fallen or Sinful Region, the seventh chakra below the *Muladhara*, centred in the soles of the feet:**

- It is the abode of destructiveness, revenge, murder, torture and hatred expressed through harming the properties, minds, emotions and bodies of others. Hatred and scorn abide here. Malice reigns supreme. Reason seldom reaches this state of mind.

This lowest *tala* is the sphere of irrational beings, including animals, having little or no sense or feeling save that of self-preservation and the

gratification of the senses - attributes of materiality which includes a vast number of the human species.

Our Earth-World is also known as *Mat Lok* or *Mrityu Lok* where life feeds on life. Murder here in general implies killing for gratification of senses, self-preservation, safety of crops and possessions, riddance from annoying elements or killing just for pleasure and so on. Whereas, even plucking of leaves, flowers, etc. is not desirable.

As God is kind to His creation, therefore, as human beings, it is our *Dharma* to be kind to His creation. And what we cannot give, we have no right to take. And what we take has to be returned as per His Law.

If our attention or consciousness remains engrossed in the activities of *Patala*, we shall have to face the consequences in the solid parts of our body viz. Skin, Bones, Veins, Hair and Flesh:

- Our whole physical body, the spine, the production and the quality of blood produced, the adrenal glands, and the tissues of the body, the internal and external sexual organs will get affected.

Esoteric (Vow 1)

There is also an inner aspect to this. This inner step has got to do with the chakras in the body. The 1st step has got to do with the cleaning of the *Muladhara* chakra, which is associated with the basic instincts. It's a prayer to the Lord to save us from the pitfalls of *Patala*. The phala or result of this is *Sama*.

To restrain the mind from wandering towards sense objects is *Sama*. *Sama* consists in not allowing the mind to externalize. It is only possible if we remember not to follow our inherent instinctive nature.

Muladhara chakra is our memory centre and it creates consciousness of time through the powers of memory. Retaining our consciousness at *Muladhara* chakra helps in overcoming sense gratification, conceit, malice, murder, and pull of enchanting material world and in turn helps save our physical body, spine and other parts from any damage.

There are six chakras above the *Muladhara*, which is located at base of the spine. When awareness is flowing through these chakras,

consciousness is in the higher nature. There are also seven chakras below the *Muladhara*, and when awareness is flowing through them, consciousness is in the lower nature.

In this age, the Kali Yuga, most people live in the consciousness of the seven force centres below the *Muladhara*:

- Their beliefs and attitudes strongly reflect the animal nature, the instinctive mind. Thus, the *Muladhara* chakra is the dividing point between the lower nature and the higher.
- Through personal *sadhana*, prayer, meditation, right thought, speech and action and love of God, we lift our own consciousness into the chakras above the *Muladhara*, bringing the mind into the higher nature.

In context of marriage, when the relationship is confirmed with due blessings of the parents from both sides, there is a strong feeling of *longing* between the couple to be with each other.

Phera 1 is a prayer to the Lord to provide for food and other household goods but save from its snares lest they forget the Lord. **Cleaning of chakra** implies freeing itself from the ill effects of its South Pole or *Tala*.

This is accomplished by directing the *longing*, earlier experienced by the couple between them, now for God and with the application of *Sama*, they are able to divert the attention away from the perpetual pull of the Objective World.

The task is duly accomplished under the guidance of a true Guru without whom realization of self, Self (Creative Power, Word, *Shabd*) and God is not possible.

Phera 2
Pray for strength and for a peaceful and healthy life

Groom:

"Om oorje jara dastayaha"

The groom promises to support his wife forever. Together we will defend our family and home.

Bride:

"Kutumburn rakshayishyammi sa aravindharam"

Bride vows to stand side by side with her husband in protecting their family and home.

Exoteric (Vow 2)

The couple pray to the gods to give them both mental and physical strength and a healthy life free from ailments. This step is associated with desire, *Kama*. But *Kama* through *Dharma*.

This relates to *Svadishthana chakra* in the spiritual plane *Bhuvaloka*, which gravitates around the *Nabhi*, providing support for its action and creating the area of the Void. This chakra is located on the pubic area. It has a 6-petal lotus and a Plane of Reason and Intellect.

It is a Plane of Atmosphere, the sixth counting downwards of the seven upper worlds, realm of *Svadishthana Chakra*, consisting of the two astral regions closest to the physical plane: *Pitriloka*, "world of ancestors," (the upper region of *Bhuvaloka*) and *Pretaloka*, "world of the departed," (the realm of the earth-bound souls):

- This lower region of *Bhuvaloka* is an astral duplicate of the physical world. In fact the physical world is projected from there.

Bhuvaloka is also known as *Antariksha* or astral plane, the mid-region; the firmament or space between earth and heaven, the abode of *apsaras* (nymphs), *gandharvas* (celestial musicians), and *yakshas* (nature sprites of many types) along with the mythical wish-granting cow of plenty, *Kamadhenu*:

- It symbolizes the creative sense within us. It controls and energizes the sexual organs and the bladder.

Svadishthana chakra oversees the operation of Muladhara chakra as does each progressively higher chakra that lie below it. Once the ability to remember has been established (by retaining the consciousness at *Muladhara chakra*), the natural consequence is reason, and from reason evolves the intellect. Reason is the manipulation of memorized information.

It is a world of development or growth acting as one of the fields for the evolution of sentient beings:

- It is in this chakra that the majorities of people live, think, worry and travel on the astral plane. We open naturally into this chakra between ages 8 and 14. It is home of vibratory element Water.

Back to *Kama* through *Dharma*

Kama in worldly sense is pleasure and without *Dharma* is *Mansa* and it will keep us entrapped in the Creation as life in the Wheel-of-Eighty-Four lakh species:

It implies slipping of our consciousness from *Svadishthana* chakra to its South Pole at 'Over the Foot' known as *Rasatala*:

- This will automatically invoke the inherent features of *Rasatala* viz. Absence of Conscience (Cruel), Ignorance, Infatuation, Taste and Theft.

Rasatala is the realm of conscience-less-ness, or inner blindness to the effect of one's actions, of negativity and deep depression.

- Those living in this chakra of the feet steal freely, taking what they justify as theirs anyway, feeling that the world "owes them a living".
- Among other things it corresponds to the elemental beings that are connected with taste, and therefore includes the state of consciousness appertaining to this class.

If our attention or consciousness remains engrossed in the activities of *Rasatala*, we shall have to face the consequences in the region of Lower

Belly. It will also effect Saliva, Urine, Sperm, Marrow, and Blood in our Body.

Esoteric (Vow 2)

At a higher level the 2nd step is cleaning of *Svadishthana* chakra associated with desire. It is a prayer to the Lord, for *iccha* or desire of evolution, *Kriya* to do right action and wisdom to have clarity on the subject. One for themselves and helping others on the path. *Dama* is developed through this.

Diverting the sense organs and organs of action away from the sense objects is *Dama*. *Dama* is complimentary to *Sama* in that, success in *Dama* enhances *Sama*.

Retaining our consciousness at *Svadishthana* chakra and proper use of reason and intellect helps in overcoming the absence of conscience, ignorance, infatuation, taste and stealing nature in us. This also helps us avoid the problems of the Lower Belly.

In context of marriage, when the relationship has been confirmed with due blessings of the parents from both sides, there is a strong feeling of physical attraction and attachment between the couple and we call it *love*. Actually it is the projection of the *real love* within between the soul and its source God.

Phera 2 is a prayer to the Lord for mental and physical strength and a healthy life free from ailments but save from its snares lest they forget the Lord as usually happens in delight and pleasure.

This is accomplished by directing the *love* and *attachment*, earlier experienced by the couple between them and their possessions, now for God and with the application of *Dama*, they are able to counter effectively the negative aspects of *Rasatala*, replacing Cruelty by Kindness, Ignorance by Knowledge, Infatuation, Taste and Stealing Nature by Real Love for God.

Thus *longing* and *love* for God along with *Sama* and *Dama* provide the couple a healthy and strong foundation to go for higher chakras of increasing purity and bliss. The task is duly accomplished under the guidance of a true Guru without whom realization of self, Self and God is not possible.

Summary of Chakras – *Phera 1 and 2*

Chakra	<i>Muladhara</i>	<i>Svadishthana</i>
Meaning	Root	Sweetness
Location	Base of spine, Coccygeal plexus, Large Intestine	Sacrum; Genitals; Lower Back, Lower Abdomen
Element	<i>Earth</i>	<i>Water</i>
Purpose	Foundation	Movement and Connection
Identity	Physical	Emotional
Demon	<i>Fear and Lust</i>	<i>Guilt</i>
Signs of Deficiency	Disconnection from body; Notably underweight; Fearful; Anxious; Restless, Poor focus and discipline; Financial difficulty; Poor boundaries; Inability to be still; Chronic disorganization	Rigidity in body and attitudes; Stiffness; Frigidity; Fear of sex; Poor social skills; Denial of pleasure; Isolation; Emotional instability or numbness; Fear of change; Lack of desire, passion, excitement
Signs of Excess	Obesity, overeating; Lazy; Hoarding; Material fixation; Greed; Sluggish; Tired; Fear of change; Addiction to security; Rigid boundaries	Sexual addiction; Pleasure addiction; Excessively strong emotions (hysteria, bipolar mood swings); Oversensitive; Poor boundaries, invasion of others; Seductive manipulation; Obsessive attachment
Physical Malfunction	Disorders of the bowel, anus, large intestine; Eating disorders; Haemorrhoids; Disorders of solid parts of the body: bones, teeth; Issues with legs, feet, knees, base of spine, buttocks; Frequent illness (can be deficient and/or excessive)	Disorders of reproductive organs, spleen, urinary system; Menstrual difficulties; Sexual dysfunction; Low back pain, knee trouble, lack of flexibility; Deadened senses; Loss of appetite for food, sex, life
Balanced Characteristics	Good health; Vitality; Well grounded; Comfortable with body; Sense of trust in the world; Feeling of safety and security; Ability to relax and be still; Stability; Prosperity; Right livelihood	Graceful movement; Emotional intelligence; Ability to experience pleasure; Nurturance of self and others; Ability to change; Healthy boundaries
Colour	Red	Orange
Planet	Saturn	Moon
Basic Rights	<i>To be here, To have</i>	<i>To feel and to have pleasure</i>
Operating Principle	Gravity	Attraction of Opposites
Seed Sound	<i>Lam</i>	<i>Vam</i>
South Pole	<i>Patala</i>	<i>Rasatala</i>

Location	Under the Feet	Over the Feet
Features	Murder, Malice, Material Enchantment, Gratification of Senses, Conceit	Conscience-less-ness, Ignorance, Infatuation, Taste, Theft (Stealing Nature)

Chakras are energy centres. At different levels, these energy centres produce different qualities in a human being.

The root chakra plays a key role in the strengthening of the whole physical body. It helps in the production of blood and also effects of the quality of the blood. The *Muladhara* chakra also controls and energizes the bone marrow. Part of the transmuted basic energy helps in the smooth functioning of the brain and the chakras of the head. An over-activated root chakra is characterized by hyperactivity, restlessness or insomnia.

The growth rate of the cells and the adrenaline glands are also affected by the root chakra (*Muladhara*). A healthy sex chakra (*Svadishthana*) ensures a healthy throat chakra, which is also necessary for the development of the mental faculty.

Svadishthana chakra plays a crucial role in our quest for spiritual development. Sex energy can be transmuted into spiritual unity and love. Once the sex energy transforms, it feeds the upper chakras. Thus, sex energy is like food for the upper chakras and helps in the smooth functioning of the brain and the nervous system. The transmutation of the sex energy is extremely useful, whether one is celibate or not.

When sex energy moves from the lower chakras to the heart, the throat and the crown chakras, sex energy transforms into divine oneness, intelligence, enlightenment, love and kindness.

Right livelihood and emotional intelligence are among the balanced characteristics of the above chakras. The newlyweds are advised to build their home by money earned through honest means and their own blood and sweat and avoid attachment to unnecessary. All other balanced characteristics will automatically fall in line. This will lay a solid foundation for the inner spiritual structure.

Key Requisites: Longing and Love for each other and attachment to unnecessary directed towards God with application of *Sama* and *Dama*.

Phera 3
Pray for prosperity, wisdom and spiritual strength

Groom:

"Om rayas Santu joradastayaha"

The groom promises to earn by fair means and work for the prosperity of his family. The groom also promises to be faithful to his wife and lead a spiritual life.

Bride:

"Tava bhakti as vadedvachacha"

The bride promises to be faithful to her husband and to support him.

Exoteric (Vow 3)

This step is associated with action, *Karma*. But *Karma* through *Dharma* and the couple pray for the fulfilment of their spiritual obligation and for the successful performance of their spiritual and worldly duties. It is a commitment that they make about being focused on the higher:

- This involves three aspects, *Yajna*, *Dana* (Charity), and *Tapas*.

Yajna is a sacrificial act to give up lower for the higher; *Dana* is charity, to share with others and the couple promises to engage in for the purpose of purification and service.

Tapas refers to spiritual practices including deep meditation, reasoned self-discipline and effort to achieve self-realization:

- The “heat” from penance helps to burn their own accumulated *Karma* and *Vasanas* (imagination, fancy, knowledge, longing, impression, desire, wish, propensity, trust) of the world.
- The wise know that a mind associated with *Vasana* tends to bondage, while a mind well freed from *Vasana* is said to be an emancipated one.

This relates to *Manipura chakra* in the spiritual plane *Svargaloka*, located on the navel and it affects the general vitality of a person. It has a 10-petal lotus and home for creative vibratory element *Fire*.

It is a Celestial or Bright Plane, of Will Power. Heaven-world; the fifth counting downwards of the seven lokas:

- Svargaloka is also exoterically said to be a paradise situated on Mount Meru, "described geographically as 'passing through the middle of the earth-globe, and protruding on either side.'
- On its upper station are the gods, on the nether (or South Pole) is the abode of the demons.

Heaven is a place of enjoyment only. It is a place to reap the fruits of one's good Karmas done in the earth-plane:

- One cannot do fresh *Karmas* there. One cannot attain *Moksha* or the final emancipation from there.
- We shall have to come back to *Bhuloka* again for trying for our salvation and that too when we get a human birth which may be a very long period after passing through a cycle of 84-lakh species.

The sphere of influence of *Svargaloka* is said to reach to the pole star. It is the seat of our attention, and it transmits material well-being and inner peace.

Manipura chakra is associated with Spleen chakra and Solar Plexus chakra:

Spleen Chakra

The front spleen chakra is located on the left part of the abdomen between the front solar plexus chakra and the naval chakra.

- The front and back spleen chakras control and energize the spleen. The spleen purifies the blood of disease causing germs. It also destroys worn-out blood cells.

Solar Plexus Chakra

The solar plexus chakra is also referred to as the 'energy clearinghouse centre', mainly because the subtle energies from the lower chakras and from the higher chakras pass through it. The whole body can be energized through the solar plexus chakra:

- The front and back solar plexus chakras control and energize the diaphragm, pancreas, liver, stomach and to a certain extent energize the large and small intestines, appendix, lungs, heart and other parts of the body.
- **Malfunctioning of this may cause diabetes, ulcer, hepatitis, heart ailments and other illness related to the organs mentioned above.**
- This chakra is represented in the central nervous system by the solar plexus, where all nerves merge to form the “second brain.”
- Of its ten petals, five face up and five down. Correspondingly, depending on how the energy is flowing, the forces of willpower from this chakra add power either to worldly consciousness or to spiritual consciousness. (Two of its petals are controlled by *Vishuddha chakra* at *Janaloka* – Throat).

When awareness is confined to the realms of memory, reason and aggressive willpower, men and women are instinctive in nature:

- They are quick to react and retaliate; quick to have their feelings hurt and quick to pursue the conquest of others while fearing their own defeat.
- In these states of mind, the ego rises to its greatest prominence, and emotional experiences are extremely intense.
- Young adults from 14 to 21 discover willpower, wilfulness and individuality as this chakra unfolds.

Back to Karma through Dharma

***Karma* means action, work or deed, seen as bringing upon oneself inevitable results, good or bad, either in this life or in a reincarnation:**

- Good intent and good deed contribute to good *karma* and future happiness, while bad intent and bad deed contribute to bad *karma* and future suffering.
- In God’s accounting system, good deeds do not nullify the effect of bad deeds. One has to face the consequences of both.

And Karma without Dharma is the way to Naraka. We all believe that what we are doing is the best, we are nice to others and this is sufficient to earn a place for us in heaven. We need not look further for our liberation.

Whereas, as human being, it is our Dharma to free our soul from the clutches of body and mind. And this can be done only while living. But we do not care to read any Scripture nor do we care to seek the company of realized persons. And those who read Scriptures do not care to reflect over what they read.

As already pointed out earlier, scriptural knowledge is gainful only when it produces the desire to demonstrate in one's own life the validity of spiritual precepts.

We cannot fulfil our spiritual obligation if we keep on allowing our consciousness to fall to the South Poles – Rasatala and Patala of two lower chakras – Svadishthana and Muladhara respectively and keep on engaging in their activity.

Faith (Shraddha) in God is most essential and we must realize the importance of Manipura chakra (Svargaloka – Navel) as it supports the two lower chakras and it is the turning point in our spiritual journey if we are able to exercise Sama and Dama effectively.

And if we do not apply these two controls effectively and let our consciousness slip from Manipura chakra (Svargaloka – Navel) to its South Pole at the Ankles known as Mahatala:

- This will automatically invoke the inherent features of Mahatala viz. Unmitigated Selfishness, Self-centred, Corrupt and Possessive Nature; Complaining Nature of 'Why Me' (while facing adverse conditions) and 'Why Not Me' (while seeing others well-being). The suffering of others is of no concern.

Vedas describe corruption as hydra headed. Its heads are bribery, exploitative profit, vested interest, selfish desires, treachery, sycophancy, officiousness, wickedness, and hypocrisy.

- Hydra is a mythological monster with nine heads, each of which, when struck off, is replaced by two new ones.

Cause of corruption is deceitful lust and corruptible things on this earth are gold, silver etc. Bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of righteous.

Bribery is the door through which all sins enter and join the river of corruption, which flows in the human mind, senses and sense organs of the gross body. This results in diminishing the discerning power of mind to distinguish between right and wrong, virtuous and non-virtuous conduct and values.

The nine kinds of hydra headed corruption enter the gross body through five senses, five sense organs, and outward instinctive mind. It becomes vehement and extremely uncontrollable with the predominance of *Tamasic guna* of impurity and passivity.

***Tamasic guna* of passivity, dullness, ignorance becomes predominant and the person is forced to lead an artificial life of fun and frolic, eat drink and be merry, by ignoring the laws of God as described in the Scriptures.**

Corruption is a disease which goes on increasing with all material treatment and makes the power of soul and human spirit weaker and weaker:

- **Corruption spreads from father to the offspring, teachers to pupils, false prophets to their followers, buyer to a seller and vice versa and so on, until the entire society is corrupted.**
- **Corruption and extreme materialism can turn the mighty into weak.**

The worst thing about corruption is that it distorts the concept of knowledge. The weakness of the outward looking mind, incompetence, lack of integrity owing to excessive desire of sensual pleasure, material wealth and other psychic conditions are the real causes of falsehood, evils and corruption.

Rig Veda 2-2-12 makes it very clear that persons who acquire material wealth and property through righteous, honest and unquestionable means on the path of *Rta, Dharma* and *Satya* get good and virtuous progeny of sons and daughters:

- Those who acquire wealth through corrupt means suffer miseries and face gloom through their children.

If our attention or consciousness remains engrossed in the activities of *Mahatala*, we shall have to face weakness of eyes or blindness, diabetes, ulcer, hepatitis, heart ailments, constipation, difficulty in giving birth, appendicitis, low vitality and other intestine related diseases.

It will also effect Hunger (appetite), Thirst (*Trishna*, vehement desire for or of glory, avarice), Sloth (torpor, laziness, lethargy, idleness, indolence, inaction), Sleep (slumber, dream) and Effulgence (Light, lustre, gloss, splendour, personality). **Hypocritical belief in heaven and considering it to be the *Moksha*** will invite great calamity.

Esoteric (Vow 3)

This step is to clean the *Manipura* chakra (*Svargaloka* - Navel) where they promise to be focused on the purpose. *Uparati* is developed here. This is where the couple promise to clear all their *Karmas* and *Vasanas* of the world by meditation under the guidance of a true Guru.

Uparati consists in not thinking of things of the senses. One who wishes to go within should develop uplifting thoughts and intense desire for the highest reality.

In *Phera* 2 it is clear that a healthy and strong foundation is required to accomplish the tasks of higher chakras. **This is done by longing and love for God along with *Sama* and *Dama*.**

Manipura chakra is important because it is a turning point in our spiritual journey with right application of Will Power. Cleaning of this chakra implies freeing itself from the ill effects of its South Pole, *Mahatala*. Earning by honest means and paying our taxes rightly is one of the key requisites for self-realization.

Yajna helps in overcoming Selfish, Possessive and Complaining Nature (to give up lower for the higher); *Dana* helps in overcoming self-centred activity (by sharing our wealth with others); and Earning by Honest means and paying our taxes rightly helps in overcoming the corrupt nature. *Tapas*, the right meditative activity under the guidance of a true Guru helps in clearing *Karmas* and *Vasanas* of the world.

*Phera 4***Pray for the happiness of the couple and good children****Groom:****“Om mayo bhavyas jaradastaya ha”****The groom declares his good fortune at marrying his wife. The groom prays for a happy life and good children.****Bride:****“Lalayami cha pade vadet”****The bride affirms that she will do her best to please her husband.**

Exoteric (Vow 4)**For the attainment of happiness in all walks of life. It involves our relationship with God and His creation. We learn the meaning of real love which gives us a sense of security and bliss.****This relates to *Anahata chakra* in the spiritual plane *Maharloka* situated behind the sternum, where antibodies are produced to protect our subtle system. It has a 12-petal lotus. Its 12-petals imply that cognition can be expressed in twelve distinct ways or through as many masks or personae. It is a Plane of Greatness, Balance and of Direct Cognition. It is home to creative vibratory element *Air*.****The human body contains two heart chakras, one located at the centre of the chest, called front heart chakra, and the other located at the back of the heart, referred to as back heart chakra.****The front heart chakra energizes and controls the heart, the thymus gland and the circulatory system. Malfunctioning of the front heart chakra manifests as heart and circulatory ailments.****The back heart chakra primarily controls and energizes the lungs and, to a lesser degree, the heart and the thymus gland. Malfunctioning of the back heart chakra is marked as lung problems such as asthma, tuberculosis, and others.****Our consciousness abiding here makes us feel well-balanced, obedient, disciplined, content and self-contained. We have a deep understanding**

of human nature, which brings effortless tolerance and an innate ability to help others, to resolve conflicts and confusions.

Between ages 21 and 28, perceptions deepen and understanding matures for those who enter this chakra. Many people regress back into reason and memory. But, if awareness is mature, having incarnated many times, and well-trained all through youth, the soul proceeds smoothly into *Anahata* consciousness.

And for that one should effectively develop *Sama, Dama, and Uparati*; otherwise it is difficult to retain the consciousness at *Anahata* chakra and it slips down to its South Pole at Shanks (Calves) known as *Talatala*:

- This will automatically invoke the inherent features of *Talatala* viz. stubbornness, greed, deceit, intolerance, instinctive wilfulness and grasp of the material world.

Talatala is a region of chronic mental confusion and unreasonable stubbornness. Prolonged confusion dominates here, giving rise to instinctive wilfulness: to get rather than give, to push others around and pursue materialistic advancement over all else:

- Greed and deceit prevail in this dog-eat-dog state of mind and this state of consciousness is born of the sole motivation of self-preservation.
- Dualities of life; like heat and cold, pain and pleasure, profit and loss, friend and foe, honour and disgrace etc. agitate our mind.

If our attention or consciousness remains engrossed in the activities of *Talatala*, we shall have to face the problems of the heart and the lungs and it also shortens our life.

Likewise Gathering, Running, Walking, Contracting and Expanding, are the five attributes of Air element. These will also get effected.

Emotions reign supreme at *Anahata* chakra of the Heart. In its natural disposition of 'down and out' as is the case for majority of human beings, the current of emotions is so strong that it overrides Will Power, Reason and Intellect and Memory of lower three chakras and results in

instinctive wilfulness at its South Pole - *Talatala*. Sometimes the emotive power gets directed upward and one experiences the higher state of Peace and Bliss but such experience is short-lived if the base is weak.

Esoteric (Vow 4)

This step is to clean *Anahata chakra* (*Maharloka* - Heart). To understand the working of the heart, to understand the universal heart. To understand love, to understand universal love. *Titiksha* is developed here and we become emotionally stronger dissolving in His devotion.

***Titiksha* is the ideal forbearance.** Forbearance of all misery, agitating effects of duality; without even a thought of resisting or driving it out, without even any painful feeling in the mind or any remorse.

Cleaning of *Anahata chakra* implies freeing itself from the ill effects of its South Pole - *Talatala*.

And when we are able to exercise, *Sama, Dama, Uparati* and *Titiksha* effectively; we overcome stubbornness, greed, deceit, intolerance, instinctive wilfulness and grasp of the material world and we effortlessly hold on to the attributes of *Anahata chakra*.

In *Phera 4* the couple initially pray for their own happiness and good children but when they realize that all that exists is part of God, they truly think and wish well-being of all forms of life.

Such prayer is from their heart and this realization is the real objective of *Anahata chakra* and the basis for the next higher chakra.

Summary of Chakras – Phera 3 and 4

Chakra	<i>Manipura</i>	<i>Anahata</i>
Meaning	Lustrous gem	Unstruck Sound
Location	Solar plexus, between naval and base of sternum	Chest, Heart, Cardiac plexus
Element	<i>Fire</i>	<i>Air</i>
Purpose	Transformation	Love, Balance
Identity	Ego identity	Social
Demon	<i>Shame</i>	<i>Grief</i>
Signs of Deficiency	Low energy or chronic fatigue; Weak will; Easily manipulated; Poor self-discipline and follow-through; Low self-esteem; Poor digestion, attraction or addiction to stimulating substances; Submissive approach to life; Victim mentality; Blaming of others; Passive; Unreliable	Isolation; Low self-esteem; Antisocial; Withdrawn, cold; Critical, judgmental, intolerant of self and others; Loneliness; Depression; Fear of intimacy; Fear of relationships; Lack of empathy; Narcissism; Melancholy
Signs of Excess	Over aggressive; Need to be right, have the last word; Dominating; Controlling; Inability to slow down; Manipulative, power hungry, deceitful; Addiction to sedatives; Temper tantrums, violent outbursts; Stubbornness; Competitive; Arrogant; Hyperactive	Poor boundaries; Demanding; Clinging; Jealousy; Overly sacrificing
Physical Malfunction	Eating disorders; Digestive disorders; Diabetes; Ulcers; Hypoglycaemia; Muscle spasms, muscular disorders; Chronic fatigue; Disorders of stomach, pancreas, gall bladder, liver; Hypertension	Collapsed chest; Shallow breathing; Disorders of the heart, lungs, thymus, breasts, arms; Circulation problems; Asthma; Immune system deficiency; Tension between shoulder blades; Pain in chest
Balanced Characteristics	Responsible; Reliable; Balanced, effective will; Good self-esteem; Balanced ego-strength; Warmth in personality; Confidence, Spontaneity; Playfulness; Sense of humour; Appropriate self-discipline; Sense of one's personal	Compassionate; Loving; Peaceful; Empathetic; Self-loving; Altruistic; Balanced; Good immune system

	power; Able to meet challenges	
Colour	Yellow	Green
Planet	Mars	Venus
Basic Rights	To act and be an individual	To love and be loved
Operating Principle	Combustion	Equilibrium
Seed Sound	Ram	Yam
South Pole	Mahatala	Talatala
Location	Ankles	Shank (Calves)
Features	Selfish; Self-centred; Corrupt, Possessive and Complaining Nature	Stubborn; Greed; Deceit; Intolerance; Instinctive Wilfulness; Grasp of Material World

Subtle energies from the lower and the higher chakras pass through the Solar plexus chakra. The solar plexus chakra and the liver also contain the emotional permanent seed. The solar plexus chakra contains the will centre. **A person has the option of either succumbing to the urges of the lower nature or answering the call of his higher nature.**

When the lower will of the person is aligned to the will of the higher soul, he is on the spiritual path of righteousness. The inner strength of the person increases as he is under the influence of his higher soul.

The solar plexus houses both the positive as well as the negative lower emotions. The chakra is also the centre of courage, daring, strong drive, perseverance and the desire to win.

Positive lower emotions include ambition, daring, perseverance, strength, righteous indignation, justice and fairness. Negative lower emotions include anger, irritation, hate, envy, greed, destructiveness, violence, cruelty, resentment, worry, anxiety, fear, selfishness, aggressiveness, abrasiveness, addiction etc.

One of the main causes of malfunctioning solar plexus is the harbouring of negative emotions. The problem is further compounded by a stressful environment. The chakra is located close to the vital organs.

The malfunctioning of the solar plexus chakra can cause problems in the organs nearest to the chakra. Sometimes when the front solar plexus chakra is functioning well but the back solar plexus chakra is congested, the person has negative feelings but does not express them. Negative emotions like anger and anxiety cause the energy body to destabilize, making the physical body vulnerable to all sorts of diseases.

Continuous harbouring of negative emotions can manifest as headache, glaucoma, asthma, diabetes, high cholesterol, gastric ulcer, hyper tension, arthritis, cancer, constipation and hyperthyroidism amongst many others.

While the Solar plexus is self-oriented, the heart chakra is others-oriented. 'Others-oriented' can be explained as the pre-dominant concern for what others want, feel and expect. To be successful and happy in life, both qualities are important. The solar plexus chakra and the heart chakra need to be developed equally. This is called balancing loving-kindness with self-interest.

When our energies move into the "*Anahata*" chakra, we are a creative person. *Anahata* is located in the heart area and is like a transition between our lower chakras and our higher chakras, between survival instincts and the instinct to liberate our-self.

The heart chakra is the centre of higher emotions such as kindness, patience, joy, peace, caring and empathy. The lower emotional energies can be transmuted into higher forms of emotional energies by activating the heart chakra.

The lower three chakras are mainly concerned with our physical existence. *Anahata* is a combination; it is a meeting place for both the survival and the enlightenment chakras.

Key Requisites: Longing and Love for each other and attachment to unnecessary directed towards God with application of *Sama* and *Dama* along with *Uparati* and *Titiksha*.

*Phera 5***Pray for happiness and wellbeing of all****Groom:***"Om prajabhyaha Santu jaradastayaha"***Pray for the happiness and wellbeing of all living entities in the entire Universe. May we have righteous and obedient children?****Bride:***"Arte arba sapade vadet"***I will trust and honour you. I will be with you always.**

Exoteric (Vow 5)**For the attainment of happiness and wellbeing of all forms of life in the Universe. It involves creativity, communication, unselfish attitude and divine love.****This relates to *Vishuddhi chakra* in the spiritual plane *Janaloka* situated in the neck and the throat. This centre is in charge of every aspect of communication between human beings. It has a 16-petal lotus. It is home to creative vibratory element *Ether*:**

- **It is a Plane of Creativity and Divine Love. A terrestrial locality that is inhabited by altruistic (unselfish) celibates.**

From a physical point of view, it controls the cervical plexus; it governs the five senses and enables us to achieve the witness state:

- **It controls and energizes the throat, the thyroid glands, parathyroid glands, and lymphatic system and to a certain degree, also influences the sex chakra.**

Universal or divine love is the faculty expressed by the *Vishuddhi chakra*:

- **Whenever people feel filled with inexpressible love for and kinship with all mankind, all creatures large and small, they are vibrating within the sixteen-petalled *Vishuddha*.**

When deeply immersed in this state, there is no consciousness of being a person with emotions, no consciousness of thoughts:

- One is just being the light or being fully aware of oneself as radiant force flowing through all form.

The exceptional soul who resides fully in this centre is able for the first time to withdraw awareness totally into the spine, into sushumna, the central spiritual current. Ultimately, he realizes that the inner being is the reality of him-self.

But unless we effectively develop *Sama, Dama, Uparati* and *Titiksha*; it is not possible to retain the consciousness at Vishuddhi chakra and it slips down to its South Pole at Knees known as *Sutala*:

- This will automatically invoke the inherent features of *Sutala* viz. Jealousy, Revenge and Covetousness.

***Sutala* chakra is a Wheel of Great Depth, Retaliatory Jealousy and Coveting:**

- This chakra, found in the knees, governs jealousy, wanting what one can't have. Jealousy is a feeling of inadequacy, inferiority and helplessness.
- People in *Sutala* consciousness covet everything, often deny the existence of God and are contentiously combative.

If our attention or consciousness remains engrossed in the activities of *Sutala*, we shall have to face the problems of the throat, the thyroid glands, parathyroid glands, and lymphatic system.

Sound (speech), Anxiety (*thought, care, worry, consideration, concern, desire, anger etc.*), Space (*vacant, empty, void, sky, ether*), Delusion (*ignorance, hallucination, foolishness, bewilderment, stupefaction, fear, infatuation, perplexity, confusion, spiritual ignorance*), and Indecision (*uncertainty, skepticism, incertitude, mistrust, doubt, scruple, distrust*) are the five attributes that have sprung from ether element. These will also get affected.

Esoteric (Vow 5)

This step is to clean the *Vishuddhi chakra* (*Janaloka* - Neck, Throat). The couple help each other in what they lack. *Samadhana* is earned. There is simplicity, calmness. Teaching about a true living Guru, using communication to spread his wisdom.

Seating the mind firmly in the Lord is *Samadhana*. *Samadhana* is great patience. One who is patient is always victorious.

Cleaning of *Vishuddhi chakra* implies freeing itself from the ill effects of its South Pole - *Sutala*.

***Phera 5* is a prayer for happiness and wellbeing of all and when such prayer is duly supported by heart chakra, the practicing couple, the newlyweds experience life beyond the limitations of time and space. This is the real objective of *Phera 5*.**

Phera 6

Pray that we live in perfect harmony. May we have a long and happy life!

Groom:

O! Lovely lady, I seek you and only you, to experience all the seasons of life.

May we be happy together forever!

Bride:

“Yajne home shashthe vacho vadet”

I will always be by your side in your endeavours.

Exoteric (Vow 6)

To make all the seasons bountiful all over the world and May God grant His wisdom to all. It relates to *Ajna* chakra in the spiritual plane *Tapaloka* situated in the middle of the forehead, at the optic chiasm, where the channels of the subtle system cross. It is located at the area between the eyebrows:

- And in the front there is a Forehead chakra with a 4-petal lotus which acts as projection and receiving centre to and from astral and physical plane.

Ajna chakra is a Plane of Austerity, a world of virtue; the second highest of the seven upper worlds. It has a 2-petal lotus. The straight and narrow way leading to the Kingdom of God, the state of thoughtless awareness. It is known as the "world of the seven sages", and also "the realm of penance".

Ajna chakra is the "third eye," the centre of divine sight and direct cognition. Of its two "petals" or facets, one is the ability to look into the lower worlds or states of mind and the other is the perception of the higher worlds, or spiritual states, of consciousness.

It, therefore, is the connecting link, allowing the awakened soul to relate the highest consciousness to the lowest in a unified vision. *Tapaloka* is a devotion world, contemplation world, because of the

intellectual entities popularly considered to be sunken profoundly in contemplative devotion.

Ajna chakra energizes the Hypothalamus which then coordinates-controls and energizes the pituitary gland, the endocrine glands and the brain to a certain extent:

- Malfunctioning of the forehead chakra may result in Headaches, Vision problems, Loss of memory, Paralysis, Epilepsy, and ailments related to endocrine glands.

In our natural disposition it is not possible to retain the consciousness at Ajna chakra and it slips down to its South Pole at Thighs known as *Vitala*:

- This will automatically invoke the inherent features of *Vitala* viz. Anger, and burning Resentment.

Vitala is the Region of Negation, region of raging anger and viciousness. The second chakra below the *Muladhara*, centred in the thighs. Corresponds to the second sub-causal netherworld called *Avichi* ("joyless") or *Vitala*.

A Wheel of Negative Region, where anger and burning resentment predominates. Anger comes from despair, confusion, frustration or lack of understanding. People in the consciousness of this chakra are always wrathful, mad at the world, even angry at God.

If our attention or consciousness remains engrossed in the activities of *Vitala*, we shall have to face the problems of Mind, Memory, Intellect and Endocrine system.

Esoteric (Vow 6)

This step is to clean *Ajna* chakra. To be steadfast in wisdom. To spread wisdom, to grow. *Shraddha* is developed. **Strong faith in God and the consequent eagerness to reach Him constitutes *Shraddha*.**

Cleaning of *Ajna* chakra implies freeing itself from the ill effects of its South Pole - *Vitala*.

Phera 6 is a prayer to live in perfect harmony seeking wisdom of God and a promise by the newlyweds to experience the transcendent Light at the 'Third Eye':

- It is the top end of faith. The spiritual journey that commences with withdrawal of consciousness from 'Under the Feet' i.e. *Patala* and concentrating it at 'Third Eye' i.e. *Ajna* chakra is accomplished solely on one hundred percent faith.

Our eyes are used to seeing the outer light from sun, moon, stars, lamp or candle when reflected through a medium of suspended particles:

- But the inner journey where transcendent light prevails has no such medium nor does it require such medium. That is why there is complete darkness.
- The journey through darkness is accomplished on absolute faith in God and the Master. When we open the 'Third Eye' at *Ajna* chakra we experience this transcendent light. This light does not cast any shadow.

Absolute faith in God is the objective of *Phera 6*.

Summary of Chakras - Phera 5 and 6

Chakra	<i>Vishuddha</i>	<i>Ajna</i>
Meaning	Purification	To know, to perceive, to command
Location	Throat, Pharyngeal plexus	Forehead, brow, carotid plexus, third eye.
Element	<i>Ether</i>	<i>Transcendent Light</i>
Purpose	Communication, Creativity	Pattern recognition
Identity	Creative	Archetypal
Demon	<i>Lies</i>	<i>Illusion</i>
Signs of Deficiency	Inability to express or release; Fear of speaking; Small, weak voice; Blocked creativity; Introversion; Shyness; Tone deaf; Poor rhythm	Poor visual perception; Insensitivity; Poor memory; Difficulty seeing future; Lack of imagination; Difficulty visualizing; Poor dream recall; Denial
Signs of Excess	Too much talking; Talking as a defence; Inability to listen; Gossiping; Dominating voice; Interruptions	Delusions; Obsessions; Difficulty concentrating; Nightmares; Hallucinations
Physical Malfunction	Sore throat; Stiff shoulders; Tight neck; Disorders of the throat, ears, voice, neck; Tightness of jaw; Toxicity	Headaches; Vision problems; Loss of memory; Paralysis; Epilepsy; ailments of Endocrine system
Balanced Characteristics	Resonant voice; Good listener; Good sense of timing and rhythm; Clear communication; Lives creatively	Intuitive; Perceptive; Imaginative; Good memory; Good dream recall; Able to think symbolically; Able to visualize
Colour	Bright Blue	Indigo
Planet	Mercury	Neptune
Basic Rights	<i>To speak and be heard</i>	<i>To see</i>
Operating Principle	Sympathetic Vibration	Image formation
Seed Sound	<i>Ham</i>	<i>Om</i>
South Pole	<i>Sutala</i>	<i>Vitala</i>
Location	Knees	Thighs
Features	Jealousy; Revenge; Covetousness	Anger; burning Resentment

"*Vishuddhi*," literally means "filter." *Vishuddhi* chakra is located in the area of our throat. If our energies move into *Vishuddhi*, we become a very powerful human being who can manifest life beyond the limitations of time and space.

The throat chakra is the spiritual bridge to the higher world. In our quest for spiritual development, it is important to understand that what comes out of our mouth is more important than what goes in.

There is a strong relation between the *Vishuddhi* chakra and the *Svadishthana* chakra. While the throat chakra is the centre of higher creativity, the sex chakra is the centre of physical creativity or procreation.

Throat chakra controls and energizes the thyroid glands, parathyroid glands, the throat, the voice box, the air tube/trachea and the lymphatic system. The mouth, the salivary glands and the esophagus are also controlled by the throat chakra, the secondary throat chakra and the jaw minor chakras.

Throat related ailments such as goiter, sore throat, loss of voice, asthma, sterility etc. Asthma also happens because of emotional problems. If the person is unable to express himself/herself freely, it causes a constriction of the windpipe, which could result in asthma.

Shoulder pains can be caused by emotional troubles which affect the throat chakra as well as the solar plexus chakra. Shoulder pain can also be caused by a malfunctioning of the throat chakra which affects the armpit minor chakra.

Too much anxiety can cause the throat chakra to become over-activated.

The *Ajna* chakra is the master chakra that controls all the other chakras. The *Ajna* chakra controls and energizes the pituitary gland, the endocrine glands and the brain to a certain extent. The *Ajna* chakra influences the root chakra and is thus also responsible for the health of our skin. **That is why there is a peculiar glow on the face of a person who meditates.**

Malfunctioning *Ajna* chakra can lead to ailments related to the endocrine glands.

When our energies move into the "*Ajna*" chakra, located between our eyebrows, we are intellectually enlightened. We attain to a new balance and peace within us. The outside no longer disturbs us, but we are still experientially not liberated.

Key Requisites: Longing and Love for each other and attachment to unnecessary directed towards God with application of *Sama* and *Dama*; *Uparati* and *Titiksha*; along with *Samadhana* and *Shraddha*.

Phera 7
May we always be good friends!

Groom:

“Om sakhi jaradastayahga”

With this last Phera we belong to each other forever.

Bride:

“Attramshe sakshino vadet pade”

I am delighted to be your wife. May we be together forever!

Exoteric (Vow 7)

This step represents the promise that both understand the purpose of this union, which is liberation and service. That both will strive for it and help others. Both promise that they will help each other become complete in oneself. Become one with the Guru's Word, *Shabd*.

It relates to *Sahasrara* chakra in the spiritual plane *Satyaloka* situated in the limbic area, it represents the integration of all the chakras and all the aspects of the Divine within us:

- Located at the top of the head, it is also called the crown chakra. It has a 1000-petal lotus. It is also one of the major entry points of prana into the body.

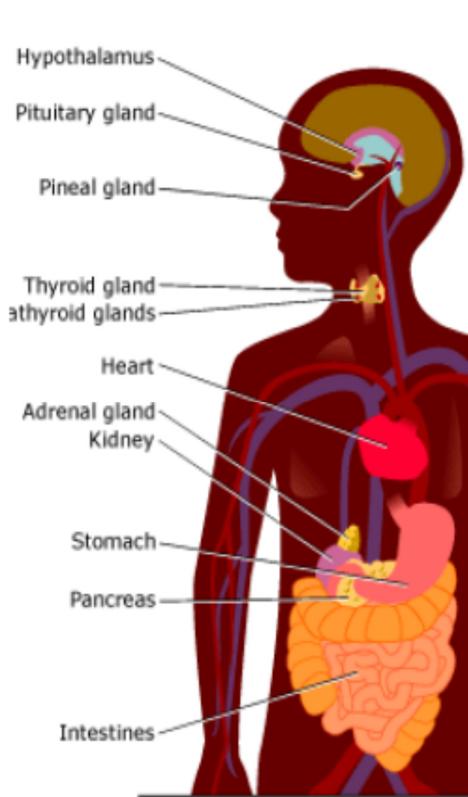
It is a Plane of Reality, Understanding, Insight, Consciousness, Illumination, Awareness and Truth filled with the silence and the bliss of the Spirit:

- It is the highest of the seven upper worlds. It is the inmost and closest to the radiating spiritual centre, and yet it extends its influence in, above, through and beyond all the other inferior lokas.

It controls and energizes the pineal gland, the brain and the hypothalamus:

- Hypothalamus is the main coordinating centre between the endocrine and nervous systems. Pineal gland is known to regulate

mating behaviour, middle body temperature and day-night (wake-sleep) cycle.



In its natural disposition, our consciousness flows down to its South Pole at Hips known as *Atala*:

- This will automatically invoke the inherent features of *Atala* viz. Fear and Lust.

It is a Wheel of Bottomless Region, the first lower chakra below the *Muladhara*, located in the hips, governs the state of mind called fear, which is truly a bottomless abyss:

- Someone in this consciousness fears death, fears life, even fears God and other people. This centre is also the home of lust and promiscuity. Lust is a strong desire for sexual gratification (and material things) or a strong desire or drive.
- Being South Pole of *Satyaloka*, there is complete absence of Truth which results in Fear that prevails in all other chakras of the body.

It is a home to three types of women – *svairinis* ("self-willed"), who like to marry men from their own group; *kaminis* ("lustful"), who marry men from any group, and the *pumscalis* ("whorish"), who keep changing their partners.

When consciousness of a man or woman enters *Atala*, a strong field of lust, it induces sexual energy in both and they enjoy sexual play and forget impending death.

If our attention or consciousness remains engrossed in the activities of *Atala*, we shall have to face the problems like Depression, Confusion, Alienation, Coma, Migraines, Brain tumours; Amnesia; and Cognitive delusions.

Esoteric (Vow 7)

This step is to clean *Sahasrara chakra*. To free ourselves from the slavery of nature, money and wealth, wives and children. To see the vanity of worldly things:

- **To discriminate between that which is true and that which is untrue, between the eternal and the transitory.**

***Mumukshutva* is developed. *Mumukshutva* is the intense desire to be free.**

After the seventh step, the couple legally become husband and wife. Tying the knot of their respective clothes confirms their attachment to each other and to a complex maze of 'sweet home' life. This is the objective part.

But *Phera 7* is a reminder to the couple that this attachment has an inner aspect which is subjective. There must be a way out from this maze of 'sweet home' life. We do possess the courage to enter this 'maze' like Abhimanyu, however, we must know the way out. All the scriptures tell us that there is a way out but it has to be learnt from a true Guru as we learn the sciences of the Objective World from the respective teachers.

It is important to understand how we fell into the trap of nature and what is that force which keeps us bound to the Great Wheel-Of-Eighty-Four life after life:

- The answer is very simple. It is the **Demon of Attachment** which has many names and forms like *Moh*, Ignorance, Infatuation, and *Trishna* and so on. Attachment (मोह) is the off-spring of desire; and then it gives birth to further desire.

Saint Tulsidas Ji in the form of a conversation between Garuda and sage Kakbhushundi on manas rog in Uttarkand of Ramcharitmanas has confirmed it as under:

सुनहु तात अब मानस रोगा । जिन्ह ते दुख पावहिं सब लोगा ॥
मोह सकल व्याधिन्ह कर मूला । तिन्ह ते पुनि उपजहिं बहु सूला ॥

Now pay heed, my friend, to the ailments of the mind, from which all people suffer.

Attachment is the root of all ailments, from which again arise many afflictions.

(Ramcharitmanas, Uttarkand, Doha: 120 A-B, Chaupai 14-15)

In the course of our ceaseless wanderings in the world, our mind is debased by numerous maladies which Tulsidas calls the 'ailments of the mind'. **Our mind is attached to this world under the delusion of maya – illusion.** This attachment (infatuation) – ignorance is the root of all its other ailments.

Our love and attachment for this world, worldly associations, and continuous indulgence in our possessions and the desire to possess more pulls us back to this level of creation. **This attachment is the root of all our other ailments. It is the mother of all diseases.**

Our soul when it enters Triloki is wedded to mind and then attached to a very complex 'maze' of 'sweet home' comprising of causal, astral and physical bodies and further subject to their respective cosmic fields and their luring objects:

- But at the back of it is the Creative Power of God (*Nam, Word, or Shabd*) which makes their play possible. This is the subjective part. Our *Dharma* is to invoke this inner attachment of the Creative Power and free ourselves from the bondage of mind, body and the Objective World.
- This attachment if it remains objective is a Demon. *Phera 7* is a prayer to the Lord to free ourselves from the '**Demon of Attachment**' and HELP invoke the liberating side of the Attachment which is the Creative Power of God within.

- This requires the guidance of a true Guru, one who is liberated and merged in the One and has His authority to liberate others.

We cannot find a truly liberated teacher with our intellect. We must seek help of God with a strong desire above all other desires to know our Creator. The maxim is, "When the pupil is ready, the Master appears."

Depending upon the nature of our desire i.e. for things created (not-self) or the power that works behind creation (self) we shall be led to a suitable teacher.

So, desire from God for His Understanding so that we can know Him while living and make best use of our sojourn at *Bhuloka*. Remember there are no guarantees after death. So, achieve whatever you have to while living.

How does this 'Demon of Attachment' work?

As primal command of God we were sent to experience His creation and now our accumulated experience is the main hindrance to break free from our embodied status and in realization of self, Self and God. Our accumulated experience in all lives as humans, our *Sanskaras*, push us down from higher lokas to physical plane or underworld and we remain embodied in various forms in the astral, physical, and the underworld.

Thirst (Trishna) is the reason why the ego seeks reincarnation. It is the blind thirst for manifested life, the desire to find some region where the ego can express itself. Until the realisation of *Brahmn* is reached, there must always be *Trishna*. When a man has assimilated all that he has acquired, and made it part of himself, then *Trishna* will arise and drive him out to seek new experiences.

Trishna is the thirst for the things which the human ego formerly knew, and which it wills and desires to know again — things familiar and akin to it from past experiences — which draws the intermediate nature or human ego of man back again to incarnation in earth-life.

It is attracted anew to what is to it old and familiar worlds and scenes; it thirsts for the manifested life comprising them, for the things which it formerly made akin to itself; and thus is it attracted back to those spheres which it left at some preceding period of its evolutionary journey through them, when death overtook it.

Its attraction to return to earth is naught but an operation of a law of nature. Here the intermediate nature or human ego sowed the seeds of thought and of action in past lives, and here therefore must it of necessity reap their fruits. It cannot reap where it has not sown, as is obvious enough. It never goes whither it is not attracted or drawn.

These seeds of former thoughts and acts, of former emotions, desires, loves, hates, yearnings, and aspirations, each one of such begins to make itself felt as an urge earthwards, towards the spheres and planes in which they are native, and where they naturally grow and expand and develop.

In this our present life also, all of us are setting in motion causes in thought and in action which will bring us back to this earth in the distant future. We shall then reap the harvest of the seeds of thought and action that we are in this present life planting in the fields of our human nature.

Led by attachment, born of desire, we cling to those things that are incompatible with our soul's nature; and we pray for those things that are dangerous to its peace.

Thus having understood the working of the '**Demon of Attachment**' the couple pray to the Lord and seek His help to come out of the 'maze' of 'sweet home' life successfully. **Using the rituals of their marriage they help each other in executing the spiritual wedding of the soul as bride to God as groom.**

The couple actually make great promises to the Lord and to each other, knowingly or unknowingly. We might be unaware and ignorant but the Lord is aware and wise. He will make sure we keep our promise, no matter how many lifetimes it takes!

So it is better that we are aware of it and work towards it and why not do it now in this very lifetime and be done with it.

After the wedding is complete, the bride leaves for groom's home, where family members of the groom welcome the newly wedded couple in a ritual known as *Grihapravesa* (home coming/entry). This ceremony typically requires participation of the mother, father, brothers, and sisters, or other relations of the groom.

Summary of Chakras - *Phera 7*

Chakra	<i>Sahasrara</i>
Meaning	Thousand-fold
Location	Top of head, Cerebral cortex
Element	<i>Thought</i>
Purpose	Understanding
Identity	Universal
Demon	<i>Attachment</i>
Issues	Transcendence; Immanence; Belief systems; Higher Power; Divinity; Union; Vision; Consciousness; Awareness; Intelligence; Information; Spirit; Emptiness
Goals	Expanded consciousness
Signs of Deficiency	Depression; Alienation; Confusion; Boredom; Apathy; Inability to learn or comprehend; Spiritual cynicism; Rigid belief systems; Excess in lower chakras - materialism, greed, domination of others
Signs of Excess	Spiritual addiction; Confusion; Overly intellectual; Heady; Spacey; Disassociation from body
Physical Malfunction	Coma; Migraines; Brain tumours; Amnesia; Cognitive delusions
Balanced Characteristics	Ability to perceive, analyse and assimilate information; Intelligent; Thoughtful; Aware; Open-minded; Able to question; Spiritually connected; Wisdom and mastery; Broad understanding
Colour	Violet
Planet	Uranus
Basic Rights	<i>To know and to learn</i>
Operating Principle	Consciousness
Seed Sound	<i>No seed mantra - can use Om</i>
South Pole	<i>Atala</i>
Location	Hips
Features	Fear and Lust

The crown chakra is the centre of higher intuition and when fully developed, manifests as 'direct knowing' or 'direct inner perception'. The intuitive faculty is beyond logic. The pineal gland is connected with the ageing and anti-ageing process and the crown chakra controls and energizes the pineal gland.

From *Sahasrara* to *Muladhara* chakra is the Upper House and their corresponding South Poles from *Atala* to *Patala* is the Lower House. Fear and Lust pervade the Lower House. Fear causes deficiency and lust causes excess in the chakras.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Garbadan

The first coming together of the husband and wife for bringing about conception

Begetting a Virtuous Child

Of the sixteen Samskaras, this is the first. Besides liberation, marriage serves another purpose that of propagation of soul. The couple should aim to beget a virtuous child and the best advice has been given by Lord Vishnu in Garuda Purana as under:

Garuda said:

- The righteous men having enjoyed term in heaven are born in a stainless family. Now tell me how he is produced in the womb of the mother.
- I wish to hear what the pious man of virtuous actions thinks while in womb.

The Blessed Lord said:

- Garuda, you have asked a good question. I will tell you that supreme secret, even by knowing which one acquires eligibility of omniscience (all-knowing, all-wise).
- I will tell you the spiritual nature of the body which possesses the attributes of the Universal Egg, -- the object of concentration of Yogins. Hear how the Yogins reflect upon the six chakras* within and likewise contemplate upon the nature of the Supreme Being in the *Brahmarandhra*.

Universal Egg: Or the World Egg is a beginning of some sort, and the universe or some primordial being comes into existence by "hatching" from the egg. The universe is "egg-shaped cosmos", Brahmanda - 'Brahm' means 'cosmos' or 'expanding' and 'anda' means egg.

Yogin: One who practices yoga i.e. invoking union of the Creative Power within and has achieved some spiritual insight.

Brahmarandhra: Aperture in the crown of the head where the *sushumna nādi* terminates.

* Six *chakras* are the operative centres of the body. Life force enters the physical body through 2-petal lotus at the eye centre and it controls the activity of five lower *chakras*.

Life force in the physical body is diffused in five *pranic* currents which interact with five *tattvas* (subtle creative elements) viz. Ether at 16-petal lotus at Throat *chakra*, Air at 12-petal lotus at Heart *chakra*, Fire at 8-petal lotus at Navel *chakra*, Water at 6-petal lotus at Genital *chakra* and Earth at 4-petal lotus at Rectal *chakra*.

The interaction of *pranas* and subtle *tattvas* create an etheric 'web' which is also called etheric body. It carries the organizational blueprint of the physical body.

Life force which is electro-magnetic in nature flows down from the eye centre and this downward flow is caused by the whirling (clockwise) movement of *chakras*. From eye centre to Throat, Heart, Navel, Genital, and Rectal performing inner activities of the body and finally it flows out to the physical universe through attention.

The *chakras* are positioned within spinal column and are subtle energy fields. The six physical *chakras* are reflections of corresponding six centers in the astral body, which are themselves a reflection of six centers in the causal and more pure spiritual region.

The physical universe experienced by us is therefore a reflection of a reflection. By contemplative meditation Yogins reverse the whirling of these *chakras* by withdrawing attention from the physical universe and are able to experience the subtle creation in astral and higher regions depending upon the realization status of their Teacher.

How a pious of virtuous actions is born in the house of the pure and prosperous, I will tell you also about the disposition and religious observance of the parents:

- When the menses commence, the woman should be avoided for four days. Her face should not be seen* during that time, lest sin should arise in the body.

*Not seeing the face implies that man should not pay attention to physical assets of woman so as to avoid lustful thoughts that may lead to copulation during prohibited four days.

The reason behind this prohibition is that during the first four days souls from hardest hells enter the womb and in the next three days souls from other hells and lower spiritual planes enter the womb. Therefore, pregnancy should be avoided during these seven days if one is desirous of begetting a pious and virtuous child.

- Having bathed, and washed her clothes, a woman becomes pure on the fourth day. From the seventh day she becomes fit to perform the rites of worship to the forefathers and the Shining Ones.
- During the seven days the embryo continues impure and leads to the birth of sinful. Here the sons gradually enter during the eighth day.
- Sons are born on even nights, daughters on odd. Keeping away from her during the first seven days, he should try copulation on even days to beget a son and on odd days to beget a daughter.
- From commencement of menstruation, commonly sixteen nights are declared to be period of menses for women for conceiving a child. Sixteen are favourable, but the fourteenth of them is best. On the fourteenth night the seed remains there certainly.
- Righteous man who copulates on fourteenth night is blessed with the righteous son, a store of auspicious qualities. That night is never obtained by unrefined, uncultivated (normal) people.
- On the fifth day women should eat sweet foods. Pungent, acidic, astringent and hot things should be entirely avoided. The seed from the husband is like nectar and to beget a righteous child, it should be carefully preserved in the womb free from the effects of bitter, brackish, pungent and hot food.
- The husband, like a husbandman, having sown the seed of great potentiality in the field which is productive of grain, reaps a good harvest.
- The man, having chewed betel (to augment the virile power), put on flowers and sandal-paste, and clean clothes, and with righteous thoughts in his mind, should unite with his good wife.
- According to the thoughts in his mind at the time of union will be the nature of the one who enters the womb.
- The supreme soul as consciousness, intelligence in seed form remains always established in the sperm. When passionate attention

and semen are absorbed in each other, then the man obtains semen, and it is discharged in the womb of the woman.

- With the union of semen and blood in the interior of the womb the formation of body takes place. The virtuous son who enters the womb is the giver of the highest bliss.
- The meritorious soul obtains birth in a high family. At the time of his birth Brahmins* receive much wealth.

*According to Vajrasuchi-Upanishad, who is a Brahmin? One who has directly realised his Ātmā and who is directly cognizant, like the berry in his palm, of his Ātmā that is without a second, that is devoid of class and actions, that is free from the faults of the six stains (hunger, thirst, grief, delusion, old age, and death) and the six changes (birth, existence, growth, transformation, decrease, and annihilation), that is of the nature of truth, knowledge, bliss, and eternity, that is without any change in itself, that is the substratum of all the kalpas, that exists penetrating all things that pervades everything within and without as ākāś, that is of nature of undivided bliss, that cannot be reasoned about and that is known only by direct cognition.

He who by the reason of having obtained his wishes is devoid of the faults of thirst after worldly objects and passions, who is the possessor of the qualifications beginning with *sama* (*sama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *tiṭīkshā*, *samādhāna*, and *sraddhā*), who is free from emotion, malice, thirst after worldly objects, desire, delusion, etc., whose mind is untouched by pride, egoism, etc., who possesses all these qualities and means -- he only is the brāhmaṇa.]

- He grows up in his parents' house, endowed with learning and modesty, becoming skilful in all the sciences, by association with the wise.
- In his youth he is divinely handsome, wealthy and benevolent, arising as the result of great merit, austerities, and pilgrimages formerly done and he marries a brilliant, charming, and virtuous woman.
- Then he constantly strives to discriminate between the self and the not-self by false accusation and aspersion, two sorts of arguments, he meditates upon *Brahmn*.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

The Inept Bride (*Kuchajee*)

Adi Granth, Raag Suhi M1, Page 762: 5-14

This poem has been written in a spirit of humility and prayer:

- Guru Nanak has used the analogy of the bride, devoid of all merit, for the inept aspirant who seeks union with the Lord.
- If the bride has no virtues and is full of vice, how can she ever hope to consummate her marriage?

Guru Nanak says that the Spouse is sought after by many, and each of them is more virtuous than the other:

- What chance, then, has a worthless wife of being accepted by her Husband?

Continuing the analogy, Guru Nanak says that the bride is running after gold and silver and other worldly treasures, not realizing that even these come from her Lord. Man is fascinated by His creation and forgets the Creator.

Even when old age descends and hair turns grey, the ignorant man continues to waste his precious human life and still fails to make any preparation for his journey to the hereafter.

Guru Nanak concludes with a prayer to the Lord: Just as You have showered the blessing of Your presence on others, so may You bless me also one day.

रागु सूही महला ੧ कुचजी ੧੭ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

*Manjh kuchajee amaavan dosare
ਮੰਜੁ ਕੁਚਜੀ ਅਮਾਵਣਿ ਡੋਸਡੇ ਹੁਤ ਕਿਉ ਸਹੁ ਰਾਵਣਿ ਜਾਤ ਜੀਤ ॥*

I am vile, and countless are my sins, how shall I go and revel in my Lord's love.

इक दू इकि चडंदीआ कउणु जाणै मेरा नाउ जीउ ॥

One excels the other in merit and beauty, who is there to know my name?

जिन्ही सखी सहु राविआ से अम्मबी छावडीएहि जीउ ॥
से गुण मंबु न आवनी हउ कै जी दोस धरेउ जीउ ॥

Those who revel in His love delight in the mango-shade, but I imbibe none of their virtues: On whom shall I put the blame?

किआ गुण तेरे विथरा हउ किआ किआ घिना तेरा नाउ जीउ ॥

How shall I expand upon Thy merits, O Lord? Which of Thy names shall I utter?

इकतु टोलि न अम्मबडा हउ सद कुरबाणै तेरै जाउ जीउ ॥

Not one of Thy virtues can I reach; a hundred times I am a sacrifice unto Thee.

सुइना रूपा रंगुला मोती तै माणिकु जीउ ॥
से वसतू सहि दितीआ मै तिन्ह सिउ लाइआ चितु जीउ ॥

Gold and silver, pearls and rubies, these are Thy gifts and I am lost in them.

मंदर मिटी संदडे पथर कीते रासि जीउ ॥
हउ एनी टोली भुलीअसु तिसु कंत न बैठी पासि जीउ ॥

Temples made of clay and decorative stones have led me astray and I sat not by the side of my Lord.

अम्मबरि कूंजा कुरलीआ बग बहिठे आइ जीउ ॥
सा धन चली साहुरै किआ मुहु देसी अगै जाइ जीउ ॥

Over the sky the cranes shriek (implying old age has come), the herons have come and sat on me (implying hair has turned grey). I am now to

leave for my in-law's house (implying the hereafter); with what face shall I turn up there?

ਸੁਤੀ ਸੁਤੀ ਜਾਲੁ ਥੀਆ ਭੁਲੀ ਵਾਟਡੀਆਸੁ ਜੀਤ ॥
ਤੈ ਸਹ ਨਾਲਹੁ ਸੁਤੀਅਸੁ ਦੁਖਾ ਕੁਂ ਧਰੀਆਸੁ ਜੀਤ ॥

I slept through the night and it turned into morn, and having lost the way, I became separated from my Lord. Now a heap of sorrows await me.

ਤੁਧੁ ਗੁਣ ਮੈ ਸਭਿ ਅਵਗਣਾ ਇਕ ਨਾਨਕ ਕੀ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ਜੀਤ ॥
ਸਭਿ ਰਾਤੀ ਸੋਹਾਗਣੀ ਮੈ ਡੋਹਾਗਣਿ ਕਾਈ ਰਾਤਿ ਜੀਤ ॥੧॥

Thou are all virtue, I am without merit; Nanak hath but this prayer:

Thou, O Lord, hast blessed Thy brides
With Thy presence for all these nights;
Is there a night also for me? [1]

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

The Meritorious Bride (Suchajee)

Adi Granth, Raag Suhi M1, Page 762: 14-19 and Page 763: 1

This hymn is the complement of “The Inept Bride”:

- Guru Nanak enumerates in it the qualities of a competent and successful bride.
- The title denotes a person who is devoted to the Lord, lives in His will and is engaged in the practice of the Word (*Shabd*).

When the Lord is with one, he is at peace with himself and the world:

- He has surrendered himself to the Lord and is content in whatever condition the Lord keeps him.
- He also realizes that everything occurs according to His will.

If He so wills, He appears as a delightful person and if His will is otherwise, He assumes a dreadful form. He is unfathomable.

Guru Nanak concludes this small poem with the prayer that the Lord might bestow on him the guru’s Word, for through that alone will he attain him.

सूही महला १ सुचजी ॥

Jaa too taa mai sab ko
 जा तू ता मै सभु को तू साहिबु मेरी रासि जीउ ॥
 तुधु अंतरि हउ सुखि वसा तूं अंतरि साबासि जीउ ॥

If Thou are with me, I have everything; Thou are my Lord, the source of all joy. In Thy presence abides all bliss, in Thy presence is all my glory.

भाणै तखति वडाईआ भाणै भीख उदासि जीउ ॥

If it be Thy will, give me the honour of a king; if it be Thy will, make me a wretched beggar.

भाणै थल सिरि सरु वहै कमलु फुलै आकासि जीउ ॥

If it be Thy will, make me a mighty ocean flowing over dry land; if it be Thy will, make a lotus flower bloom in the sky.

भाणै भवजलु लंघीऐ भाणै मंड्जि भरीआसि जीउ ॥

If it be Thy will, we cross the terrible sea of life; if it be Thy will, we drown in midstream.

भाणै सो सहु रंगुला सिफति रता गुणतासि जीउ ॥

If it be Thy will, thou appearest high-spirited, full of virtue and merit, worthy of all praise.

भाणै सहु भीहावला हउ आवणि जाणि मुईआसि जीउ ॥

If it be Thy will, Thou seemest terrible, throwing one into the never-ceasing cycle of birth and death.

तू सहु अगमु अतोलवा हउ कहि कहि ढहि पईआसि जीउ ॥
किआ मागउ किआ कहि सुणी मै दरसन भूख पिआसि जीउ ॥

O Lord, Thou are unfathomable, immeasurable; speaking of Thee, I fall into self-oblivion. What shall I ask, pray, what shall I utter, save that I hunger and thirst for a glimpse of Thee?

गुर सबदी सहु पाइआ सचु नानक की अरदासि जीउ ॥२॥

Through the guru's Word (*Shabd*) the Lord is attained; for this boon Nanak truly prays. [2]

सूही महला ੫ ਗੁਣਵਾਂਤੀ ॥

जो दीसै गुरसिखड़ा तिसु निवि निवि लागउ पाइ जीउ ॥
आखा बिरथा जीअ की गुरु सजणु देहि मिलाइ जीउ ॥

ਸੋਈ ਦਸਿ ਉਪਦੇਸਡਾ ਮੇਰਾ ਮਨੁ ਅਨਤ ਨ ਕਾਹੂ ਜਾਇ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਇਹੁ ਮਨੁ ਤੈ ਕੁਂ ਡੇਵਸਾ ਮੈ ਮਾਰਗੁ ਦੇਹੁ ਬਤਾਇ ਜੀਉ ॥

हउ आइआ दूरहु चलि कै मै तकी तउ सरणाइ जीउ ॥
मै आसा रखी चिति महि मेरा सभो दुखु गवाइ जीउ ॥

इतु मारगि चले भाईअड़े गुरु कहै सु कार कमाइ जीउ ॥
तिआगें मन की मतझी विसारें दूजा भाउ जीउ ॥

इउ पावहि हरि दरसावडा नह लगै तती वाउ जीउ ॥
हउ आपहु बोलि न जाणदा मै कहिआ सभु हुकमाउ जीउ ॥

हरि भगति खजाना बखसिआ गुरि नानकि कीआ पसाउ जीउ ॥
मै बहुङ्गि न त्रिसना भुखझी हउ रजा त्रिपति अघाइ जीउ ॥
जो गुर दीसै सिखडा तिसु निवि निवि लागउ पाइ जीउ ॥ ३ ॥

Adi Granth, Raag Suhi M5, Page 763: 1-8

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

The Lost Opportunity

Adi Granth, Raag Suhi M1, Page 763: 9-18 and Page 764: 1-4

In this hymn surcharged with love for the Lord, man has been compared to a bride, God to her bridegroom, and the span of human life to a night:

- The night is meant for the newly married woman to play the game of love with her husband and for their love to be consummated.
- Instead, she wastes the opportunity by occupying herself with frivolous activities of the world.
- When she could have enjoyed a life of rapture and bliss with her Lord, she accumulated a heavy load of sins.
- The master, in his compassion, offers to serve as a middle man, but the foolish bride, in the insolence of her youth, does not heed his words of wisdom.

Near the end of the night, the bride realizes her folly and humbly prays to the master to arrange her union with the Lord:

- The master, in his mercy, accedes to her request, and eventually the woman lives in everlasting bliss, as she wins the love and affection of her Lord.

रागु सूही छंत महला ੧ ਘਰੁ ੧ ॥ ੧੬੮॥ सतिगुਰ प्रਸਾਦਿ ॥

*Bhar joban mai mat peeerai
भरि जोबनि मै मत पेर्हअड़ै घरि पाहुणी बलि राम जीउ ॥*

Intoxicated with the wine of youth, I knew not that I was but a guest in my parents' home. I am a sacrifice unto Thee, O Lord.

मैली अवगणि चिति बिनु गुर गुण न समावनी बलि राम जीउ ॥

Soiled as I was with sins, no virtue could enter my mind without the master's help.

गुण सार न जाणी भरमि भुलाणी जोबनु बादि गवाइआ ॥

Devoid of virtue, lost in delusion, I wasted away my youth in vain.

वरु घरु दरु दरसनु नहीं जाता पिर का सहजु न भाइआ ॥

My Spouse was at the door of His abode and I saw Him not, I tasted not my Lord's bliss.

सतिगुर पूछि न मारगि चाली सूती रैणि विहाणी ॥

I asked not the path from the master, and in sleep the night passed away.

नानक बालतणि राडेपा बिनु पिर धन कुमलाणी ॥१॥

Thus I was widowed in youth, O Nanak; without the benign warmth of the Lord, the bride withered. [1]

बाबा मैं वरु देहि मैं हरि वरु भावै तिस की बलि राम जीउ ॥
रवि रहिआ जुग चारि त्रिभवण बाणी जिस की बलि राम जीउ ॥

O father, marry me to my Lord, I pine for Him, I belong to Him whose Word pervades the three worlds, and in all ages, I am a sacrifice unto Him.

त्रिभवण कंतु रवै सोहागणि अवगणवंती दूरे ॥

The Lord of three worlds enjoys virtuous bride but keeps away from the unvirtuous.

जैसी आसा तैसी मनसा पूरि रहिआ भरपूरे ॥

As is the desire, so is the hope fulfilled by the all-pervading Lord.

हरि की नारि सु सरब सुहागणि रांड न मैलै वेसे ॥

The Lord's bride is eternally blissful; she is widowed not, nor wears she soiled robes.

नानक मै वरु साचा भावै जुगि जुगि प्रीतम तैसे ॥२॥

O Nanak, I love my true Spouse, my Beloved, who remains the same age after age. [2]

बाबा लगनु गणाइ हं भी वंजा साहुरै बलि राम जीउ ॥
साहा हुकमु रजाइ सो न टलै जो प्रभु करै बलि राम जीउ ॥

O father, have the auspicious moment calculated that I may speed to my in-laws; and let the auspicious moment be determined by His will, for His command will not be undone.

किरतु पइआ करतै करि पाइआ मेटि न सकै कोई ॥

Whatever is the writ of our deeds decreed by the Lord, no one can erase.

जाजी नाउ नरह निहकेवलु रवि रहिआ तिहु लोई ॥

My Bridegroom is self-dependent and pervades all the three worlds.

माइ निरासी रोइ विद्धुनी बाली बालै हेते ॥

Maya laments in despondency, for she envies the love between the bride and the Bridegroom.

नानक साच सबदि सुख महली गुर चरणी प्रभु चेते ॥३॥

The bride lives in the bliss of the Word, O Nanak, in the Lord's palace; she clings to the feet of the master and cherishes the Lord. [3]

बाबुलि दितडी दूरि ना आवै घरि पेर्ईऐ बलि राम जीउ ॥

My father has sent me to such a distant land, the land of my Lord that I shall not have to return to my parents' world.

रहसी वेखि हदूरि पिरि रावी घरि सोहीऐ बलि राम जीउ ॥

Now I revel in my Lord's presence; the Lord enjoys me and I look radiant in His home.

साचे पिर लोडी प्रीतम जोड़ी मति पूरी परधाने ॥

The true Lord wanted me and so my Beloved united me with Himself and perfected my understanding.

संजोगी मेला थानि सुहेला गुणवंती गुर गिआने ॥

How fortunate was the moment that I met Him! How blessed the place of our union! How grateful I am to my master who imparted this wisdom to me!

सतु संतोखु सदा सचु पलै सचु बोलै पिर भाए ॥

Truth and contentment I have gathered in my lap, and the Lord loves me for my true speech.

नानक विछुड़ि ना दुखु पाए गुरमति अंकि समाए ॥४॥१॥

I shall not suffer separation from Him, O Nanak, through the grace of my master I have merged in Him. [4:1]

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Anand Karaj Sikh Marriage Ceremony

The fourth Guru, Guru Ramdas, composed the Hymn (*Chhant 2*) popularly known as *Lavan* in *Suhi Raag* to depict the love between the soul and its source God and the preparation done to take this holy union to its climax using the prevalent marriage ritual of *Pheras* or *Lavan*:

- Guru Sahib has given a spiritual colour to *Lavan* through which soul's spiritual progress can be known.

The Sikh marriage ceremony is known as Anand Karaj meaning "blissful union":

- Anand marriage is a sacrament. The Guru is a witness to the marriage. No writing or document is necessary. The bridegroom is to vow fidelity to the wife - *Istribrat Dharam*, while the bride is to vow fidelity to her husband - *Patibrat Dharam*.
- The husband is to protect the life and honour of his wife while she to remain content with the lot of her husband. The couple signify their consent by bowing before Guru Granth Sahib.
- Anand Karaj consists of the couple revolving around Granth Sahib four times as the *Lavan* (Marriage Hymns) are being recited. Revolving is the sign of making commitment with the Guru as a witness.

In addition, revolving signifies that Guru is the centre of the couple's life and springs life and understanding of the journey of the soul crossing this world to be one with God.

- During the marriage ceremony, Guru Granth Sahib (Guru) represents the core while the congregation (Sadh Sangat) represents the support.

- The marriage ceremony is conducted in a Gurdwara by an appointed priest in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. Appropriate hymns for the occasion are sung while, family, friends, and guests arrive.
- The groom is first seated before Guru Granth Sahib and the bride takes her place on his left.
- The couple and their parents are asked to stand while the rest of congregation remains seated.
- A prayer is then conducted invoking God's blessings for the proposed marriage and asking His Grace for the union of the couple.
- This connotes the consent of the bride and the groom and their parents. The parties then resume their seats and a short hymn is sung.

This is followed by a brief speech addressed particularly to the couple, explaining the significance of marriage:

- The couple is then asked to honour their vows by bowing together before Guru Granth Sahib.
- Then the bride's father places one end of saffron-coloured scarf in the groom's hand, passing it over the shoulder and placing the other end in the bride's hand. Thus joined, the two will take the vows.
- The essential part of the ceremony is the prayer to all-pervading Lord. Now that we are here in the august and sacred court of the Lord, it is but proper and necessary that we understand what the Guru's teachings and ideals are in this connection and what he means and expects of us.

ਸ੍ਰੀਰਾਗੁ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ॥
 ਸੁਖਦਾਤਾ ਭੈ ਭੰਜਨੋ ਤਿਸੁ ਆਗੈ ਕਰਿ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥
 ਮਿਹਰ ਕਰੇ ਜਿਸੁ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਨੁ ਤਾਂ ਕਾਰਜੁ ਆਵੈ ਰਾਸਿ ॥੩॥
(Adi Granth, Sri Raag, M5 Page 44: 15-17)

*The One Who gives peace, Who destroys fear,
 Before Him say your prayer.*

*To those whom the Merciful Lord shows His mercy
Have their tasks successfully concluded.*

- This is followed by a short hymn.

सलोक मः ५ ॥

उसतति निंदा नानक जी मै हभ वत्राई छोड़िआ हभु किञ्चु तिआगी ॥
हभे साक कूड़ावे डिठे तउ पलै तैडे लागी ॥ १ ॥

(Adi Granth, Raag Ramkali M5, Page 963: 17-18)

*Praise and slander have I all ceased to relish, O Nanak,
False, I count all other relationships,
to the fold of Thy fabric am I now affianced.*

Lavan (Marriage Hymn) from Guru Granth Sahib Ji are then read and sung by the musicians while the couple slowly encircles Guru Granth Sahib Ji:

- The groom leads in a clock-wise direction and the bride, holding the scarf, follows as nearly as possible in step.
- When the couple reaches the front of Guru Granth Sahib Ji, they both bow together and take their respective seats.
- The same protocol is repeated for the remainder three verses.

All the gathering (Sadh Sangat) should have the consciousness of God's presence in mind, whereas the Bride and the Bridegroom are imagined to be sitting in the lap of God, the source of all love and affection, and the blessings of the whole congregation are with them:

- As they move round the Holy Granth, they should do so with a feeling and faith that they are walking, in the course of joint life to make themselves inseparably one, to make their united life a perfect union not only physical, but also intellectual and spiritual.
- This life of union has also four stages of development. One is of Fear (Awe), the other of Love, the other of Restraint and the last of Harmony or perfect at-oneness. Fear is not slavish Fear, but "Nirmal bhao", Fear which dispels all fear. It also means discipline.

Four Lavan or Laav

The Four Wedding Rounds

Each of the four *Laav* has a special significance and describes the marriage of the soul-bride to the divine husband. The hymns outline the progressive stages of the awakening soul-bride as she advances spiritually to ultimately blend with the divine groom in the dawning realization of her divine destiny.

First Lavan or Laav

(Emphasizes the beginning of return journey of the soul to its Eternal Home)

(Adi Granth, Raag Suhi M4, Page 773: 17-19 and Page 774: 1-13)

ਰਾਗੁ ਸੂਹੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੪ ਛੰਤ ਘਰੁ ੧ ੧੬ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥
 ਹਰਿ ਪਹਿਲਡੀ ਲਾਵ ਪਰਵਿਰਤੀ ਕਰਮ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਾਇਆ ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਤ ॥
 ਬਾਣੀ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਵੇਦੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਹੁ ਪਾਪ ਤਜਾਇਆ ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਤ ॥
 ਧਰਮੁ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਹੁ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵਹੁ ਸਿਸ਼ਿਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਾਇਆ ॥
 ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰਾ ਆਰਾਧਹੁ ਸਭਿ ਕਿਲਵਿਖ ਪਾਪ ਗਵਾਇਆ ॥
 ਸਹਜ ਅਨੰਦੁ ਹੋਆ ਵਡਭਾਗੀ ਮਨਿ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਮੀਠਾ ਲਾਇਆ ॥
 ਜਨੁ ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਲਾਵ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਆਰਮਭੁ ਕਾਜੁ ਰਚਾਇਆ ॥੧॥

In the first round of the marriage ceremony, the Lord sets out His instructions for performing the daily duties of married life. Instead of performing rituals by routine, embrace the righteous life of Dharma, renounce sinful actions and do nothing that separates you from God.

Meditate on the Lord's *Nam*; embrace and enshrine the contemplative remembrance of the *Nam*. Worship and adore the Guru, the Perfect True Guru, and all your sins shall be dispelled. By great good fortune, celestial bliss is attained, and the Lord seems sweet to the mind. Servant Nanak proclaims that in this first round, the marriage ceremony has begun.

Second Lavan or Laav

(Signifies the stage of yearning and love for each other)

ਹਰਿ ਦੂਜਡੀ ਲਾਵ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਮਿਲਾਇਆ ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਤ ॥

निरभउ भै मनु होइ हउमै मैलु गवाइआ बलि राम जीउ ॥
 निरमलु भउ पाइआ हरि गुण गाइआ हरि वेखै रामु हदूरे ॥
 हरि आतम रामु पसारिआ सुआमी सरब रहिआ भरपूरे ॥
 अंतरि बाहरि हरि प्रभु एको मिलि हरि जन मंगल गाए ॥
 जन नानक दूजी लाव चलाई अनहद सबद वजाए ॥२॥

In the second round of the marriage ceremony, the Lord leads one to meet the True Guru. Filled with the awe of the Infinite, our ego gets dissolved. In awe of the One who is forever pure, sing His wonderful praises and see God in all.

The Lord - the Supreme Soul, is the Master of the Universe. He is omnipresent, omniscient, and all-pervading. Deep within us, and outside as well, there is only One God. God's humble servants meet together and sing the songs of joy and ecstasy. Servant Nanak proclaims that in this second round, the music of the spheres resounds. The soul-bride experiences the unstruck music, Creative Power - the Word or *Shabd*.

Third Lavan or Laav

(Signifies the stage of detachment or *Virag*)

हरि तीजड़ी लाव मनि चाउ भइआ बैरागीआ बलि राम जीउ ॥
 संत जना हरि मेलु हरि पाइआ वडभागीआ बलि राम जीउ ॥
 निरमलु हरि पाइआ हरि गुण गाइआ मुखि बोली हरि बाणी ॥
 संत जना वडभागी पाइआ हरि कथीऐ अकथ कहाणी ॥
 हिरदै हरि हरि धुनि उपजी हरि जपीऐ मसतकि भागु जीउ ॥
 जनु नानकु बोले तीजी लावै हरि उपजै मनि बैरागु जीउ ॥३॥

The third round of the marriage ceremony signifies longing for the Lord and detachment from the world. In the company of the saints, by our great good fortune, we encounter the Lord. The Immaculate Lord is found by singing His praises and repetition of His *Nam*.

By great good fortune we have risen in the company of the saints wherein is told the story of the Ineffable Lord. The Holy *Nam* echoes in

the heart and absorbs us. We repeat the *Nam* of the Lord, being blessed by a fortunate destiny writ on our forehead. The slave Nanak proclaims that in the third round, the love of God has been awakened in the heart resulting in detachment from the world.

Fourth Lavan or Laav

(Signifies the final stage of harmony and union in marriage wherein human love blends into the love for God)

हरि चउथड़ी लाव मनि सहजु भइआ हरि पाइआ बलि राम जीउ ॥
 गुरमुखि मिलिआ सुभाइ हरि मनि तनि मीठा लाइआ बलि राम जीउ ॥
 हरि मीठा लाइआ मेरे प्रभ भाइआ अनदिनु हरि लिव लाई ॥
 मन चिंदिआ फलु पाइआ सुआमी हरि नामि वजी वाधाई ॥
 हरि प्रभि ठाकुरि काजु रचाइआ धन हिरदै नामि विगासी ॥
 जनु नानकु बोले चउथी लावै हरि पाइआ प्रभु अविनासी ॥४॥२॥

In the fourth round of the marriage ceremony, the mind becomes peaceful having found the Lord. Through the grace of the Guru we have attained the Lord with ease; the sweetness of the Beloved pervades our soul.

Dear and pleasing is the Lord to us, and night and day we lovingly focuses our awareness on the One. We merge with the Lord and all our desires are fulfilled. The Lord's *Nam* resounds and reverberates within and all around us. The Lord blends with the bride whose heart blossoms in the illumination of his *Nam* forthwith.

Servant Nanak proclaims that, in this, the fourth round of the marriage ceremony the eternal Lord God is attained.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Women's Duties

(From 'The Mahabharata', Anusasana Parva CXLVI)

Mahadev said: Thou, O goddess, art conversant with what is supreme and what is not. Thou art acquainted with all duties. I desire to question thee about the duties of women:

- **Thou, whose words are always consistent with righteousness,** I desire to hear thee discourse on that subject from the beginning. The subject, when discoursed upon by thee, will become endued with great merit. **Indeed, that discourse will then become authoritative in the world.**
- **Women, especially, are the highest refuge of women. Among human beings, that course of conduct which thou wilt lay down will be followed from generation to generation.** Half of my body is made up of half thy body. All the eternal duties of women are well-known to thee. Do thou, therefore, tell me in detail what are the duties of thy sex.

Uma said: O holy one, it is through thy grace that the words I am uttering are taking their rise in my mind. **I shall, according to the ordinance, discourse on the subject of women's duties:**

- **The duties of women arise as created at the outset by kinsmen in the rites of wedding.** Indeed, a woman becomes, in the presence of nuptial fire, the associate of her lord in the performance of all righteous deeds.

According to the Hindu scriptures, marriage is not a contract. It is the union of two individuals of opposite sexes into one person for better performance of all deeds of piety.

- **Possessed of a good disposition, endued with sweet speech, sweet conduct, and sweet features, and always looking at the face of her husband and deriving as much joy from it as she does from looking at the face of her child, that chaste woman who regulates her acts by observing the prescribed restraints, comes to be regarded as truly righteous in her conduct.**

- Listening with reverence to the duties of wedded life (as expounded in the scriptures), and accomplishing all those auspicious duties, **that woman who regards righteousness as the foremost of all objects of pursuit**, who observes the same vows as those that are observed by her husband, **who adorned with chastity, looks upon her spouse as a god**, who waits upon and serves him as if he is a god, **who surrenders her own will completely to that of her lord**, who is cheerful, who observes excellent vows, who is endued with good features, **and whose heart is completely devoted to her husband so much that she never thinks even of any other man**, is regarded as truly righteous in conduct.
- That wife, who even when addressed harshly and looked upon with angry eyes by her lord, presents a cheerful aspect to him, is said to be truly devoted to her husband.
- **She who does not cast her eyes upon the Moon or Sun or a tree that has a masculine name, who is adored by her husband and who is possessed of beautiful features**, is regarded as truly righteous.
- That woman, who treats her husband with the affection which she shows towards her child, even when he (the husband) happens to be poor or diseased or weak or worn out with the toil of travelling, is regarded as truly righteous in her conduct.
- That woman who is endued with self-control, who has given birth to children, who serves her husband with devotion, and whose whole heart is devoted to him, is regarded as truly righteous in her conduct.
- That woman who waits upon and serves her lord with a cheerful heart, who is always cheerful of heart, and who is possessed of humility, is regarded as truly righteous in her conduct.
- **That woman who always supports her kinsmen and relatives by giving them food, and who's relish in gratifying her desires or for articles of enjoyment, or for affluence of which she is possessed, or for the happiness with which she is surrounded, falls short of her relish for her husband**, is regarded as truly righteous in her conduct.

- That woman who always takes a pleasure in rising at early dawn, who is devoted to the discharge of all household duties, **who always keeps her house clean**, who always attends to the domestic fire, **who with her husband gratifies the guests and all servants and dependants of the family with that share of food which is theirs by ordinance**, and who always takes according to the ordinance, for herself, what food remains in the house after the needs have been met of guests and servants, **and who gratifies all people who come in contact with her family and feed them to their fill**, succeeds in acquiring great merit.
- That woman who is endued with accomplishments, who gratifies the feet of her father-in-law and mother-in-law, and who is always devoted to her father and mother, is regarded as possessed of ascetic wealth.
- That woman who supports with food Brahmanas that are weak and helpless, that are distressed or blind or destitute, comes to be regarded as entitled to share the merit of her husband.
- That woman who always observes, with a light heart, vows that are difficult of observance, whose heart is devoted to her lord, and always seeks well of her lord, is regarded as entitled to share the merits of her husband.
- Devotion to her lord is woman's merit; it is her penance; it is her eternal Heaven. Merit, penances, and Heaven become hers who looks upon her husband as her all in all, and who, endued with chastity, seeks to devote herself to her lord in all things.
- The husband is the god which women have. The husband is their friend. The husband is their high refuge. Women have no refuge that can compare with their husbands, and no god that can compare with him. The husband's grace and Heaven, are equal in the estimation of a woman; or, if unequal, the inequality is very trivial.
- Maheshwara, I do not desire Heaven itself if thou art not satisfied with me. If the husband that is poor, or diseased or fallen among foes, or afflicted by a Brahman's curse, were to command the wife to accomplish anything that is improper or unrighteous or that may

lead to destruction of life itself, the wife should, without any hesitation, accomplish it, guided by the code whose propriety is sanctioned by the law of Distress.

I have thus, O god, expounded, at thy command, what the duties of women are. Verily, that woman who conducts herself in this way becomes entitled to a share of the merits won by her husband.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Wifely Virtues

(From Tulsi Ramayana (Sri Ramacharitamanasa), Aranya Kanda, 4)

**Devotion of body, speech and mind to her lord's (husband's) feet is
the only duty, sacred vow and penance of a woman**

Sita, who was so good-natured and modest, met Ansuya (Rishi Atri's wife). In affectionate and mild tones the holy woman (Ansuya) then proceeded to discourse on some wifely virtues.

Ansuya said:

- Listen, O Princess (Sita). A mother, father and brother are all kind to us; but they bestow only limited joy. **A husband, however, bestows unlimited joy (in the shape of blessedness).**
- Videha's daughter, vile is the woman who refuses to serve her husband. Fortitude, piety, a friend and a wife - these four are put to the test only in times of adversity.
- **A woman who treats her husband with disrespect**, even though he is old, sick, dull headed, indigent, blind, deaf, wrathful or most wretched, **shall suffer various torments in hell** (the abode of Yama, the god of death).
- **Devotion of body, speech and mind to her lord's (husband's) feet is the only duty, sacred vow and penance of a woman.**

Four types of faithful Wives

There are four types of faithful wives in this world: so declare the Vedas, the Puranas and all the saints.

- **A woman of the best type is convinced in her heart of hearts that she cannot even dream in this world of a man other than her lord.**
- The middling regards another's husband as her own brother, father or son (according to his age).

- She who is restrained by considerations of virtue or by the thought of her race is declared by the Vedas as a low woman.
- And know her to be the lowest woman in this world, who is restrained only by fear and want of opportunity.

The woman who deceives her husband and loves a paramour is cast for a hundred cycles into the worst hell known as *Raurava*.

- Who is as depraved as the woman who for the sake of a moment's pleasure reckons not the torment that shall endure for a thousand million births?
- The woman who sincerely takes a vow of fidelity to her husband easily attains the highest state; while she who is disloyal to her lord is widowed as soon as she attains her youth wherever she may be reborn.

A woman is impure by her very birth; but she attains a happy state (hereafter) by serving her lord.

Listen, Sita, women will maintain their vow of fidelity to their husbands by invoking your very name, Sri Rama being dear to you as your own life.

It is for the good of the world that I have spoken to you on the subject.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Women should always be worshipped and treated with Affection

(From 'The Mahabharata', Anusasana Parva, Section XLVI)

Bhishma said:

- Respect, kind treatment and everything else that is agreeable, should all be given unto the maiden whose hand is taken in marriage.
- Her sire and brothers and father-in-law and husband's brothers should show her every respect and adorn her with ornaments. If they be desirous of reaping benefits, for such conduct on their part always leads to considerable happiness and advantage.
- Women should always be worshipped and treated with affection. There where women are treated with respect, the very deities are said to be filled with joy.
- There where women are not worshipped, all acts become fruitless. If the women of a family, in consequence of the treatment they receive, grieve and shed tears, that family soon becomes extinct.
- Those houses that are cursed by women meet with destruction and ruin as if scorched by some Atharvan rite. Such houses lose their splendour. Their growth and prosperity cease.
- Women are weak. They fall an easy prey to the seductive wiles of men, disposed to accept the love that is offered to them, and devoted to truth. There are others among them that are full of malice, covetous of honours, fierce in disposition, unlovable and impervious to reason. Women, however, deserve to be honoured.
- Do ye men show them honour? The righteousness of men depends upon women. All pleasures and enjoyments also completely depend upon them. Do ye serve them and worship them. Do ye bend your wills before them?

- The begetting of offspring, the nursing of children already born, and the accomplishment of all acts necessary for the needs of society, behold, all these have women for their cause. By honouring women, ye are sure to attain to the fruition of all objects.

In this connection a princess of the house of Janaka the ruler of the Videhas, sang a verse. It is this:

- Women have no sacrifices ordained for them. There are no Shraddha's which they are called upon to perform. They are not required to observe any fasts.
- To serve their husbands with reverence and willing obedience is their only duty. Through the discharge of that duty they succeed in conquering heaven.
- In childhood, the sire protects her. The husband protects her in youth. When she becomes old, her sons protect her. At no period of her life does woman deserve to be free.
- Deities of prosperity are women. The persons that desire prosperity should honour them. By cherishing women, one cherishes the goddess of prosperity herself, and by afflicting her, one is said to afflict the goddess of prosperity.

She is a true wife who is....

(From 'The Mahabharata', Adi Parva, Section LXXIV)

She is a true wife who is skilful in household affairs. She is a true wife whose heart is devoted to her lord (husband). She is a true wife who knows none but her lord.

The wife is a man's half. The wife is the first of friends. The wife is the root of religion, profit and desire. The wife is the root of salvation. They that have wives can perform religious acts.

They that have wives can lead domestic lives. They that have wives can achieve good fortune. Sweet speech wives are friends on occasions of joy. They are the fathers on occasions of religious acts. They are mothers in sickness and woe.

Even in the deep woods to a traveller a wife is his refreshment and solace. He that has a wife is trusted by all. A wife, therefore, is one's most valuable possession. Men scorched by mental grief, or suffering under bodily pain, feel as much refreshed in the companionship of their wives as a perspiring person in a cool bath.

No man even in anger, should do anything that is disagreeable to his wife, seeing that happiness, joy and virtue, - everything depends on the wife. For these reasons does marriage exist?

Note:

Atharvan Rites involve use of incantations, herbs and fire to cure sickness, provide help during times of crisis, provide protection from the demons, snakes and the evil eye; promote good luck in gambling; and to cause misfortune for one's enemies and rivals. Mantras are used to bring about these desired outcomes.

On a discourse on disposition of women in the Mahabharata, *Anusasana Parva*, Section XXXVIII, when questioned by sage Narada, celestial fairy Panchachuda, though reluctant, being herself a woman, to speak ill of women, agrees to enumerate what are the true and eternal faults of women.

Panchachuda said: Even if high born and endued with beauty and possessed of protectors, women wish to transgress the restraints assigned to them. This fault truly stains them, O Narada! Their disposition is such that they are incapable of being restrained when bent upon transgression.

There is nothing else that is more sinful than women. Verily, women are the root of all faults. That is certainly known to thee, O Narada!

Women, even when possessed of husbands having fame and wealth, of handsome features and completely obedient to them, are prepared to disregard them if they get the opportunity.

This, O puissant one, is a sinful disposition with us women, that, casting off modesty, we cultivate the companionship of men of sinful habits and intentions.

There is none whom they are incapable of admitting to their favours. They never take into consideration the age of the person they are prepared to favour. O great Rishi, there is no man in this world whom women may regard as unfit for companionship.

The destroyer, the deity of wind, death, the nether regions, the equine mouth that roves through the ocean, vomiting ceaseless flames of fire, the sharpness of the razor, virulent poison, the snake and Fire - all these exist in a state of union in women. O Narada, when women were created, these faults that I have enumerated were planted in them!

In Section XXXIX, Yudhishtira enquires from Bhishma whether women are truly capable of being restrained within the bounds prescribed by the scriptures or whether anyone before our time did really succeed in so restraining them. Verily, how can women, therefore, be restrained by men? They make a lie appear as truth, and a truth appear as a lie. Whether treated by men with respect or with disdain, women are seen to turn the heads and agitate the hearts of men.

In Section XL, Bhishma replies that in a former creation women were all virtuous. Those, however, that sprang from this creation by Brahma with the aid of an illusion became sinful. He goes on to explain:

- It has been heard by us that all persons of the human race are characterised by righteousness, and that they, in course of natural progress and improvement, attain to the status of deities.
- This circumstance alarmed the deities. They, therefore, assembled together and repaired to the presence of the grandsire. Informing him of what was in their minds, they stood silent in his presence, with downcast eyes.

The puissant grandsire having ascertained what was in the hearts of the deities, created women, with the aid of an Atharvan rite:

- The grandsire bestowed upon them the desire of enjoyment, all kinds of carnal pleasure. Tempted by the desire of enjoyment, they began to pursue persons of the other sex.
- The puissant lord of the deities created Wrath as the companion of Lust. Persons of the male sex, yielding to the power of Lust and Wrath, sought the companionship of women.

The deities were pleased and many Rishis succumbed to the charms of Apsaras. The succumbing to temptation on the part of the Rishi is regarded as a fault and failing because it destroys his power of *tapas*.

Women have no acts prescribed for them. Even this is the ordinance that was laid down:

- The *Sruti* (Vedas) declares that women are endued with senses the most powerful, that they have no scriptures to follow.
- Beds and seats and ornaments and food and drink and the absence of all that is respectable and righteous, indulgence in disagreeable words, and love of sexual companionship, these were bestowed by Brahma upon women.
- Men are quite unable to restrain them within bounds. The creator himself (Brahma) is incapable of restraining them within the limits that are proper: what need then be said of men?

In Section XLIII, Bhishma further recites the advice of sage Devasarman as under:

- Women should always be protected by thee from temptations and opportunities of every kind. Amongst women both kinds are to be seen, that is, those that are virtuous and those that are not so.
- Those women that are virtuous are highly blessed. They are the mothers of the universe (for they it is that cherish all creatures on every side). They it is, who uphold the earth with all her waters and forests.
- Those women that are sinful, that are of wicked behaviour, that are the destroyers of their races, and that are wedded to sinful resolves, are capable of being ascertained by indications, expressive of the evil that is in them, which appear on their bodies.
- It is even thus that high-souled persons are capable of protecting women. They cannot be protected in any other way.
- Having a regard only for the considerations of virtue, men should enjoy their society, not with enthusiasm and attachment but with reluctance and absence of attachment.
- By acting otherwise, a man is sure to meet with destruction. Reason is respected at all times and under all circumstances. There is none in the three worlds who is capable of protecting women.

The Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva, Section XIX

Yudhishtira (addressing Bhishma) said: Women in particular, the Rishis have said, are false in behaviour. Women in particular have been declared in the ordinances to be false. In the very Vedas one may read that women are false.

The Mahabharata, Santi Parva, Section VI

Vaisampaya said: Possessed of great energy, the righteous King Yudhishtira, then, in sorrow, cursed all the women of the world, saying, "Henceforth no woman shall succeed in keeping a secret."

The Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva, Section XIX & XXI

Addressing sage Ashtavakra, the old Lady said:

- The very deities of wind and fire and water, or the other celestials, O regenerate one, are not so agreeable to women as the deity of desire. When under the influence of desire, they care not for family or father or mother or brother or husband or sons or husband's brother, but pursue the way that desire points out.

- **Verily, in pursuit of what they consider happiness, they destroy the family to which they belong by birth or marriage, even as many queenly rivers eat away the banks that contain them.**

Special Note:

We ought to understand that it is not the intention of sage *Ved Vyasa*, the writer of The Mahabharata, to degrade women. **The idea is to let us know the inherent features that are loaded in them and the game played upon by the gods within.**

The gods of the astral region have been assigned the job to push us out so that we keep on experiencing the Objective World. **They are faithful to their Creator in execution of their job.**

Those who are fed up with this repetitive play of life pray to God for relief. The prayer is heard by the Merciful God and He guides us to His duly authorized and fully realized Saint of our time.

There is no other way to successfully achieve the real objective of human birth that of realization of self, Self and God. In other words the culmination of the spiritual marriage of soul-bride to God-Groom.

The Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva, Section LIX

Bhishma said: Women have one eternal duty in this world, viz., dependence upon and obedient service to their husbands, and as such, this one duty constitutes their only end.

The Mahabharata, Santi Parva, Section CXLIV

The husband is the wife's highest Deity

The husband is the wife's highest deity. She is no wife with whom her lord is not content:

- That wife with whom her husband is not pleased becomes consumed into ashes, even like a creeper adorned with bunches of flowers in a forest conflagration (a very intense and uncontrolled fire).
- A woman has no protector like her lord and no happiness like her lord. Abandoning all her wealth and possession, a woman should take to her lord as her only refuge. What chaste woman is there that would, when deprived of her lord, venture to bear the burden of life?

A householder's home, even if filled with sons and grandsons and daughters-in-law and servants, is regarded empty if destitute of the housewife. One's house is

not one's home; one's wife only is one's home. A house without the wife is as desolate as the wilderness.

'The Mahabharata', Anusasana Parva, Section CXXIII

Women's duties towards her Husband

What the excellent behaviour is of good and chaste women?

Bhishma said: Once upon a time, in the celestial regions, a lady named *Sumana*, addressing *Sandili* possessed of great energy and conversant with the truth relating to everything, said:

- By what conduct, by what course of acts, have you succeeded in attaining to heaven, purged of every sin? You blaze forth with your own energy like a flame of fire. You wear vestments of pure white, and are quite cheerful and at your ease.
- You shine with energy multiplied a thousand-fold. You have not attained to this region of happiness by inconsiderable penances and gifts and vows.

Thus questioned sweetly by *Sumana*, *Sandili* of sweet smiles answered:

- I never, in heedlessness, addressed any disagreeable or evil speech to my husband. Always heedful, I waited upon and served my mother-in-law and father-in-law.
- Even this was my resolution that I should never behave with deceit. I never used to stay at the door of our house nor did I speak long with anybody. I never did any evil act; I never laughed aloud; I never did any injury. I never disclosed any secret. Even thus did I bear myself always?
- When my husband, having left home upon any business, used to come back, I always served him by giving him a seat, and worshipped him with reverence. I never ate food of any kind which was unknown to my husband and at which my husband was not pleased.
- Rising at early dawn I did and caused to be done whatever was brought about and required to be accomplished for the sake of relatives and kinsmen. When my husband leaves home for going to a distant place on any business, I remain at home engaged in diverse kinds of auspicious acts for blessing his enterprise.
- Verily, during the absence of my husband I never use collyrium or ornaments; I never use garlands and unguents, or deck my feet with lac-dye, or person with ornaments.
- When my husband sleeps in peace I never awake him even if important business required his attention. I was happy to sit by him lying asleep. I never

urged my husband to exert more energetically for earning wealth to support his family and relatives.

- I always kept secrets without disclosing them to others. I used to keep always our premises clean.
- That woman who with concentrated attention, adheres to this path of duty, becomes the recipient of considerable honours in heaven like a second Arundhati.

Bhishma continued: The illustrious and highly blessed *Sandili*, of righteous conduct, having said these words unto *Sumana* on the subject of woman's duties towards her husband, disappeared there and then.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Transition from Wifehood to Motherhood

Motherhood is a spiritual transformation of wifehood. The wife may and does demand and take; but the mother feels it her privilege to give.

If woman as wife is socially significant, woman as mother is spiritually glorious. The mother is more worthy of reverence than father or teacher according to our scriptures.

Says the Manu Smriti (ii. 45):

- From the point of view of reverence due, a teacher is tenfold superior to a mere lecturer, a father a hundredfold to a teacher, and a mother a thousand-fold to a father.

The mother's impressions strike deep root in the brain of the foetus that dwells in the womb:

- If the pregnant woman does *Japa* (repetition of Lord's name with or without rosary) and *Kirtan* (singing the Lord's glories), if she studies religious books and leads a pious life during pregnancy, the foetus is endowed with spiritual inclination or spiritual tendency.

A woman's natural sphere of activity is the home, where she can prove most helpful to man, because she is the most adored.

The happiness for a woman lies not in catering for carnal passions, not in challenging man in his own field by forgetting her natural course of duties, but in leading the ideal life as taught in the sacred scriptures; the crowning glory of womanhood.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

How to choose a Wife - How to treat your Wife

Take unto yourself a wife and obey the ordinance of God; take unto yourself a wife and become a faithful member of society. But examine with care; on your present choice depends your future happiness.

If much of her time is deployed in dress and ornaments, if she is enamoured with her own beauty, and delighted with her own praise, if she laughs much and talks loud, **if her foot does not abide in her father's house, and eyes with boldness rove on the faces of men;** though her beauty were as the sun in the firmament of heaven, **turn your face from her charms, turn your feet from her path and suffer not your soul to be ensnared by the allurements of imagination.**

But when you find sensibility of heart joined with softness of manners, an accomplished mind with a form agreeable to your fancy, take her home to your house; she is worthy to be your friend, your companion in life, the wife of your bosom:

- Cherish her as a blessing sent to you from heaven; let the kindness of your behaviour endear you to her heart.
- **She is the mistress of your house; treat her therefore with respect, that your servants may obey her.** Do not oppose her inclination without cause; she is the partner of your cares, make her also the companion of your pleasures.
- Reprove her faults with gentleness; do not exact her obedience with rigour. **Trust your secrets in her breast; her counsels are sincere; you shall not be deceived.** Be faithful to her bed; for she is the mother of your children.
- When pain and sickness assault her, let your tenderness soothe her affliction; a look from you of pity and of love shall alleviate her grief, or mitigate her pain, and be of more avail than ten physicians. **Consider the tenderness of her sex, the delicacy of her frame, and be not severe to her weakness, but remember your own imperfections.**

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Who is she that wins the heart of Man?

In the spring of your youth, in the morning of your days, when the eyes of men gaze on you with delight, and nature whispers in your ear the meaning of their looks; ah! Hear with caution their seducing words; guard well your heart. Do not listen to their soft persuasions.

Remember you are made man's reasonable companion, not the slave of his passion. The end of your being is not merely to gratify his loose desire, but to assist him in the toils of life, to soothe him with your tenderness, and recompense his care with soft endearments.

Who is she that wins the heart of man, that subdues him to love, and reigns in his breast?

- Lo! There she walks in maiden sweetness, with innocence in her mind, and modesty on her cheek. **Her hand seeks employment; her foot does not delight in idle wandering abroad.**
- She is clothed with neatness; she is fed with temperance; **humility and meekness are as a crown of glory circling her head.** On her tongue dwells music; the sweetness of honey flows from her lips.
- **Decency is in all her words; in her answers are mildness and truth.** Submission and obedience are the lessons of her life; and peace and happiness are her reward. Before her steps walk Prudence; and Virtue attends at her right hand.
- **Her eye speaks softness and love; but discretion with a sceptre sits on her brow.** The tongue of the licentious is dumb in her presence; the awe of her virtue keeps him silent.
- **Her breast is the mansion of goodness; and therefore she suspects no evil in others.**
- She presides in the house and there is peace; she commands with judgment and is obeyed. **She rises in the morning; she considers her affairs; and appoints to everyone their proper business.**

- The care of her family is her whole delight; to that alone she applies her study; and elegance with frugality is seen in her mansions. The prudence of her management is an honour to her husband, and he hears her praise with silent delight.
- She respects all her husband's relatives. Serves her aged mother-in-law and father-in-law. She treats the guests and friends of her husband with respect.
- She never lives beyond the income of her husband. She is charitable and spends one-tenth of her husband's income in charity. Never borrows. Never allows the expenditure to exceed the income of her husband.
- She informs the minds of her children with wisdom; she fashions their manners from the example of her own goodness. The word of her mouth is the law of their youth; the motion of her eye commands their obedience.
- She speaks, and her servants fly; she points, and the thing is done; for the law of love is in their hearts; her kindness adds wings to their feet.
- In prosperity she is not puffed up; in adversity she heals the wounds of fortune with patience.
- The troubles of her husband are alleviated by her counsels, and sweetened by her endearments; he puts his heart in her bosom and receives comfort.

Happy is the man that has made her his wife; happy the child that calls her mother.

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Advice from the Bible

New Testament – The Letters of Paul

Romans 5: 3-5

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

Romans 6: 12-14

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not yield your members (*senses of perception and action*) to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under the law but under grace.

Romans 6: 20-23

When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness (*dharma*). But then what return did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8: 5-8

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8: 9, 12-14

But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. (Spirit of God is the Creative Power – Word or *Shabd* and it is there within us but has to be invoked while living under the guidance of a true Guru.)

So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

1 Corinthians 3: 18-20

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. **For the wisdom of this world is folly with God.** For it is written, '**He catches the wise in their craftiness,**' and again, '**The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.**'

1 Corinthians 6: 9-10

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 6: 13-14, 18-20

...The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power.

Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. **Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?** You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 7: 1-7

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. **It is well for a man not to touch a woman.** But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does.

[Implying one spirit in two bodies and the protection marriage provides against immorality.]

Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourself to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control. I say this by way of concession, not of command. I wish that all were as I myself am.

1 Corinthians 7: 8-11

To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband – and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

1 Corinthians 7: 29-35

Brethren, the appointed time has grown very short; from now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though as they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. **For the form of this world is passing away.**

[Time has grown very short implies that our life is short and we should sincerely start working for Holy Union with the Creative Power – the Word within now while living.]

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; **but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided.** And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; **but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband.**

I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

Galatians 5: 1, 13, 16-26

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. **For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another.**

[All initiates of a true Guru to note it carefully. Initiation by a true Guru puts us under Grace and we must give up our old ways of Sin i.e. all down and out practices so reverentially followed by us till then.]

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. **But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law.**

Now the works of the flesh are plain: Fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. **I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**

But the fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. **And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** If we

live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. **Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another.**

Galatians 6: 7-10

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reaps eternal life.

And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. **So then, as we have opportunity, let us do well to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.**

Ephesians 4: 22-27, 29-32

Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.**

Therefore, putting away falsehood let everyone speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members of one of another. **Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.**

Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.**

Ephesians 5: 15-17, 21-25, 28-33

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. **Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.** For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man

ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

[Leave his father and mother implies leaving *Kal* and *Maya*; and be joined to his wife here implies 'soul' which becomes one with the Creative Power – the Word within. Christ is the Holy Ghost or Word and church is our body where this union gets invoked.]

Colossians 3: 2, 5-6, 18-19

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

New Testament – Other Letters - Hebrews

Hebrews 11: 1-3, 6

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things, which do not appear.

And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

New Testament – Other Letters – James

James 1: 12-15, 22-25

Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him. **Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires.** Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death.

But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who observes his natural

face in a mirror; for he observes himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing.

1 Corinthians 14: 18-19

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all; nevertheless, **in church I would rather speak five words with my mind**, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

[Doer of the word means we have to do repetition by mind (Simran) of Five Holy Names given to us by our Living Master. Merely attending spiritual discourses makes us hearer but attending to repetition by mind of Five Holy Names makes us doer and the blessing in so doing is that the implanted Word within us will get invoked. We will hear the Celestial Music at a point between the two eyebrows. We shall see Transcendent Light and hear the Creative Word of God. This is the reward for the doer who acts.]

New Testament – Other Letters – The First Letter of John

1 John 1: 5-7, 8, 10

This is the message that we have heard from him and proclaim to you, **that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth;** but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

I John 2: 9-11, 15-17

He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still. **He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in there is no cause for stumbling.** But he who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

1 John 4: 16-18

So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world. **There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love.**

Esoteric and Liberating Aspect of Marriage

Summary

Marriage between two individuals is to be seen as one soul in two bodies. It should not remain only physical but attain to its highest level culminating in spiritual marriage of the soul-bride to God-Groom.

The couple should rise above the sense play and help each other in achieving the real objective of human birth that of realization of self, Self and God which is their true *Dharma*.

On its own it is not possible, the couple must seek the blessings of the Almighty. And if they are sincere in their love and longing for the Ultimate Union of soul-bride to God-Groom, He will definitely do His part.

The saying is, “**Marriages are made in Heaven**”, thus have blessings of God and on our part we must honour what He wills.

Using Intellect and Reason of *Svadishthana chakra*, one should keep a check on the Memory of the Objective World at *Muladhara chakra* and restrain the occupation of consciousness in the Lower House (*Atala* to *Patala*).

This is done by developing *Sama* and *Dama* i.e. control of the mind and the senses so as to restrain the consciousness from following the alluring features of *Rasatala* and *Patala*:

<i>Rasatala</i>	<i>Patala</i>
Ignorance, Infatuation, Taste, Theft and Absence of Conscience (Cruel)	Murder, Malice, Material Enchantment, Gratification of Senses and Conceit ('me' and 'mine') or Self-Conceit

We are passing through a period of Intellect and Reason but we use it only to gain knowledge of the Objective World. **Whereas these faculties should be used to acquire correct knowledge.**

We follow the practices that we learn from our elders without understanding their true significance and the consequences thereof. Most of what we do is merely based on hearsay.

If we look around we find that most people are suffering from the problems of **lower back** (skeletal system), **lower belly** (reproductive system) and that **monster of obesity**.

The root cause of these problems lies in our devotion to the features of Rasatala and Patala. But here we use the '*chalta hai*' or 'everybody else is doing it' attitude and look no further. We do not want to learn the advice given in the scriptures and re-affirmed time and again by Saints and hence we keep on suffering.

When we go a little higher in our body we find we have problems relating to **stomach** (digestive system) and **ailments of the heart and lungs** (circulation and respiratory system).

The root cause of these problems lies in our devotion to the features of Talatala and Mahatala:

<i>Talatala</i>	<i>Mahatala</i>
Stubbornness, greed, deceit, intolerance, instinctive wilfulness and grasp of the objective world	Unmitigated Selfishness, Self-centred, Corrupt and Possessive Nature; Complaining Nature of 'Why Me' (while facing adverse conditions) and 'Why Not Me' (while seeing others well-being). The suffering of others is of no concern.

And still higher in the body we have problems relating to **throat, thyroid and parathyroid glands, and lymphatic system** and problems relating to **mind, memory, intellect and endocrine system**.

The root cause of these problems lies in our devotion to the features of Vitala and Sutala:

<i>Vitala</i>	<i>Sutala</i>
Anger, and burning Resentment	Jealousy, Revenge and Covetousness

And then we have problems of **depression, confusion, alienation, coma, migraines, brain tumours; amnesia; and cognitive delusions**. The root cause of these problems lies in our devotion to the features of **Atala**:

<i>Atala</i>
Fear and Lust

This is the most powerful *tala* and has Demon of Attachment which is the root cause of all our ailments.

We must remember that each inner *tala* is more powerful than the outer one; the inmost (*Atala*) being the most powerful. Disease is a communication system of God and the problem faced by an individual is a signal to check the activity of related *tala*. We perform actions with a motive and the intention behind the act leads to malfunction of chakra and shows up as disease.

Practice of truth bestows physical strength; of penance, the mental; of celibacy, the moral; and the acquirement of correct knowledge bestows the intellectual and spiritual strength. And for this we shall have to act because mere verbiage will not suffice in overcoming these problems.

God has given us the most powerful tool of **Will Power** by which we can reverse the movement of chakras and win the game of life forever.

Using Will Power at *Manipura* chakra, direct the love and longing for the Objective World towards God and convert love for self to love for all, which is the Divine Love. **The Fire of *Manipura* chakra directed downwards is passion and freed from it will automatically flow upwards in its natural disposition.**

And the best way to do this is *Japa*, repetition of God's *Nam*, obtained as spoken Word from a true Guru now while living.

Garuda Purana
Chapter 16

Garuda! There is no liberation by the study of the Vedas, or by the reading of the Shastras. Emancipation is by knowledge alone, not otherwise. **The four stages of life are not the cause of liberation, nor are the six philosophies, nor are good deeds, -- knowledge only is the cause.**

The word from the Teacher gives liberation; all learning is masquerade. **Repetition of the Name of God received as spoken Word from the mouth of a realized Teacher is the way to liberation.**

Work together and seek your liberation from this never ending cycle of life, death and rebirth.
